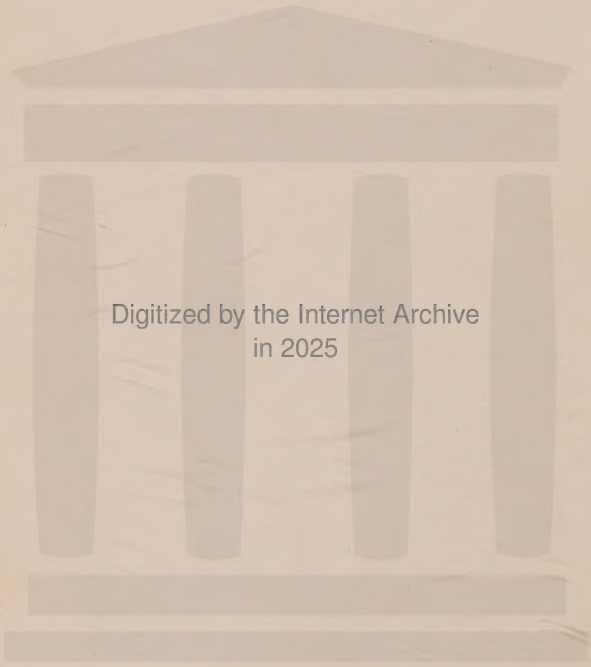

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SERMONS
FOR CHILDREN'S MASSES.

ACCORDING TO THE SUNDAYS AND PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR.

WITH

ADVICE TO THE YOUNG ON THE LAST DAY OF THE SCHOLASTIC YEAR, AND AFTER A RETREAT.

ADAPTED FROM THE ORIGINAL OF

REV. RAPHAEL FRASSINETTI,

BY

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PREFACE.

THE education of our young people in religion, thereby leading them to God, is certainly a great work, one worthy of the sublimest calling and entitling the faithful worker to the greatest consideration and preference in heaven and on earth. Our Lord gave us the example of an amiable disposition toward children. Children as well as grown people are to go to heaven, therefore the Lord gathered them about Him with a most touching familiarity. He loved them and embraced them: "Let the little ones come unto Me, for theirs is the kingdom of God." But children must first be educated in religion; they must be taught it and in a manner that would not do for grown people. Adults do not want to be talked to like children nor can children be treated in the same way as their elders. Hence while there must be sermons for grown people, for educated Christians, for philosophers and theologians, there should also be sermons suited for children. Just as hard as it is for a great, able man to come down to the level of a child, just so hard is it to find even in Bourdalou or in Bossuet what will suit children; a young priest looking for a sermon for a children's Mass would have to throw aside book after book of these great writers and preachers without finding anything suitable, and luckily for the children, for they would not understand a word said. Children's sermons are then useful in a way, because in them the necessary simplicity may be indicated for presenting the Gospel to the young. "The little

ones have asked for bread, and there was none to break it unto them" (Lam. iv. 4).

Let us hope that this book may be the beginning of a series of useful books of the same character. Religious training depends much, if not in certain circumstances altogether, on the priest, who is obliged to look for the most effective means of teaching religion, the gospels, and morality. In our time we are seeking for new books of improved methods for our secular schools, and priests will find this book of sermons to children one step toward that end. In these sermons is presented in the most simple manner the life of Our Lord as it is met with in the gospels for the Sundays. His grand examples of virtue, His heavenly teachings, His striking miracles teach religious truth in a most impressive manner. And in this way, as these young people grow up they will not only have heard the gospels and know them, but may also be furnished with a groundwork for their faith, which will last them to the end of their days and be the source of many graces to them during life, with, perhaps, the grace of final perseverance. Thus brought up according to the principles of the life of Christ, we priests engaged in this grand work may understand that we are working for this glorious end, "that the life of Jesus Christ be made manifest" in their bodies (2 Cor. iv. 10). What a consolation will it be for the good pastor, to be convinced that, having done his very best, he will gain a crown of great glory for himself and have the consolation of seeing a great number of his spiritual children growing up an honor to the Church in the future.

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SERMONS FOR CHILDREN'S MASSES.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

GOSPEL. *Luke* xxi. 25-33. *At that time Jesus said to his disciples:* There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves: men withering away for fear, and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world, for the powers of heaven shall be moved; and then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads: because your redemption is at hand. And he spoke to them a similitude: See the fig-tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh. So you also when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand. Amen, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

THE day will surely come when there will be an end to all the wickedness that exists in the world, and no more insults will be offered to God. On this day almighty God will appear in all His glory and terrible majesty as the just Judge of the living and the dead. It will be a day of terror; the sun will be obscured, covered with a thick black veil; the moon will not give light, she will shine blood red; the stars will fall from the heavens, the whole universe will be shaken to its very foundations. On that day it will rain fire from the

skies; burning coals will descend and destroy all that is on this earth. That day has been called by the prophets a cruel day, the day of wrath, the day of darkness, of tribulation and of no mercy. On that day God will pour out His wrath, and sinners will have to drink this chalice of bitterness to the dregs. Of this terrible day the Gospel of this Sunday speaks. It ought to be enough for Christians to hear the announcement of these dreadful occurrences once to make them sin no more, but, on the contrary, they hear these threats repeated several times during the year, and still they do not repent of their sins nor amend their lives.

I hope, my dear young people, that you are not of this number, but reflecting to-day on these solemn words, you will make a firm resolution not to commit a single mortal sin; and thus that dreadful day, so terrible for the sinner, will be for you a day of joy, of glory, of triumph, and the beginning of your eternal reward. When the hour of the great judgment shall arrive, St. Michael, accompanied by many other angels, will give a blast from his trumpet which shall be heard in all parts of the earth; because the sound shall be winged forth by the power of God's omnipotence. "And they shall hear the voice of the Son of God: 'Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment.'" Great and small, kings and princes, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, all shall obey that summons. At the first sound of this blast, the bodies which for centuries have been reduced to dust will return to their former shapes, and will be reanimated by the voice of the Son of God. All shall come forth from their graves, but there will be a great difference among them. The elect will rise with bodies more brilliant than the stars and like to the angels; as St. Matthew says, "Then the just shall shine like the sun." The wicked shall be there in their former bodies too, but so loathsome that it will be to them as well as to their companions a day of horror. No wonder, for the just have risen to a new life, but the wicked to eternal death.

Dear children, what would be your feelings if you should see yourselves in such an abominable body? And yet how many there are among the young who, through an inordinate love of their body, never go contrary to their passions, because they wish to indulge in unlawful pleasures.

Then the angels will separate the good from the bad. Oh, what a dreadful separation! the wicked to the left, the good to the right; the good father to the right, the wicked son to the left, the good brother to the right, the wicked one to the left; now is the time to separate the wheat from the cockle. Now is the time to bind the cockle into bundles to burn. That young man who looked so deceptively innocent in his life, who appeared so good to his parents, is now the cockle because he was wicked, he and his companions; another seemed so devout, but he, too, is the cockle because his heart was full of sin. All the most hidden sins will then be manifest; those sins which were committed in the dark and in secret places, those sins which through shame were withheld from the knowledge of the confessor, and those sins, mark it well, which were confessed, but without sorrow and without the resolution to do better. Yes, father, mother, sisters, brothers and friends shall know all our secrets. Nahum the prophet says: "I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will show thy [wickedness] to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms."

But now heaven opens, and the holy cross appears, carried by angels; the cross, the sign of redemption and of life; the wicked shall fall on their faces as if struck by lightning. What cries and shrieks will they utter! But the good will rejoice when they see the cross, and falling on their knees they will cry out: "O holy cross, we hail thee, our only hope! O cross, our comfort in life and now our glory and triumph, we adore thee!" But behold, in this tumult of voices, amid all this thunder and lightning, in the midst of these fiery clouds, appears the dread Judge, clothed in garments of revenge. The terrible Majesty, with eyes burning like coals

of fire. What anger, what menacing looks! His anger shall burn like a fire (Ps. lxxxviii. 47). A red mantle on His shoulders; from His mouth proceeds a two-edged sword. The sinner shall tremble at the sight; the eyes of Christ, the Judge, shall meet the terrified looks of the sinner. The guilty shall also see, but not for his consolation, the sweet face of Mary, the Mother of sinners, and he will exclaim: "O Mary, help me! Mother, have pity on me, throw a glance of mercy toward me! Cover me, O Mary, with thy mantle!" But Mary shall turn from him and say: "No longer call me Mother; you are no son of mine: there is no longer time for mercy, but for justice, and divine vengeance; I feel no pity for you; when in your life I wished you to be my son, you refused to come to me; now it is too late."

The angels, too, and all the saints of heaven will reaffirm God's dreadful damnation, and turn from you in disgust: "He will speak to them in His anger." The great Judge will then speak in His wrath to the sinner, and call him to a rigorous account for all his sinfulness, even for the most secret deeds.

"Up to the present I have been silent and patient; now is My time to render you punishment for all your iniquities; 'give back what thou owest.' If I were your father where was the honor due Me as such? Hardly did you come to the use of reason when you began to insult Me. You arose in the morning and went to bed at night like an animal, without remembering your Creator; you did not know your prayers, but learned early to curse My holy name. Look at your youthful waywardness, your disobedience to your superiors. From your earliest childhood you took a pride in being unruly; you know your thefts, your quarrels, your lies, your filthy practices, by which you rent and soiled the white garment of your Baptism. You went to church only to dishonor Me; at Mass you laughed, talked, and did not pray, but disturbed others in their devotions. Give an account of all this; not only of this, but give an account, too, of the

sins which you made others commit. Your companion was innocent, but you corrupted him, and you are guilty of the sins which he afterwards committed. How many souls redeemed by My precious blood you have destroyed! 'Give back what thou owest.' Rise and give an excuse for all this, if you can. 'Tell Me if thou hast anything to justify thyself' (Isaias xliii. 26). Will you plead ignorance? Were you not born in a Christian family, where you received holy teachings, and saw many examples of virtue? What advice did your parents, your teachers, and also your confessor give you? You knew the malice of sin, still you persisted in committing it; you knew there would be a judgment, when you would have to give an account of even an idle word; you knew that in your surroundings in the school and on the street that there was cockle sown among the wheat, but you would not be edified by good example. Will you give as an excuse, weakness: that your passions were too strong for you? You could, if you had wished, have made yourself strong, for you had at hand prayer and the sacraments; I gave you My body as food and My blood as drink, but they became a poison to you because you received them unworthily. You had the help of the saints, of the angels and of Blessed Mary. How many youths with less strength than you, weaker than you, more tempted than you, and more exposed to dangers, have preserved themselves from the contamination of vice. There is a young man who at home saw nothing but bad example, whose parents had no love for God, still he remained good. After your first communion you were pious for a while. Why did you cease to be pious? Why did not your piety last for life, as it should? Ah, wretch! you shall feel the effects of My anger; the blood which I shed for you will condemn you." The trembling sinner, convicted by the all-wise Judge, will not be able to open his mouth in his defence; he will call upon the mountains to cover him, the flames to destroy him; yes, he will even call upon hell itself to hide him in its bosom.

Then Christ, the Judge, with a sweet smile upon His face, will turn to the elect and say to them: "My beloved and faithful ones, now is the time come when I will reward you for the services which you have so faithfully rendered Me. Yes, I remember the good examples you have shown, the good advice given to your companions, the crust of bread and the glass of water given to the poor in My name. I remember that from your tenderest years you offered Me your innocent hearts. I remember your many acts of love, and while others have forgotten and offended Me, you have always honored, loved, and visited Me. Now has the time come for the great feast in paradise. 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Come now to eternal rest, come away from poverty to wealth, from tears to joy, from the cross to the crown." What joy there will be! Indeed you are the glory of God, for He will acknowledge you before the whole world as His faithful children; worthy of the delights and glory of heaven. Can you imagine a greater honor? "Thou art My servant Israel, for in thee will I glory" (Isaias xlix. 3). You are very happy, my dear young people, when a compliment is paid you by some great personage, and you never forget it. How great then will be your happiness to receive praise from God Himself!

Then again the eternal Judge will change His demeanor, and turning to the wicked will say: "Ah! you miserable beings, what have you to expect from Me? You did not love nor reverence Me in your life; I will not now acknowledge you. I know you not. You did not wish to have part with Me, and now you shall not. Go from my presence; you are objects of my hatred; go, ye damned, into eternal fire. 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire' (Matt. xxv. 41). Cursed by My divine Father, cursed by Me, cursed by the Holy Ghost, cursed by Mary, by the angels and all the saints." What dreadful cries will these wretches send forth on hearing these maledictions! The saints will

repeat the curses of God: "Away from here, ye accursed, away from here, ye accursed!" Then the saints will praise God for His justice.

These wretches would throw themselves into hell if they could, but God wants them to be witnesses of the triumph of the good; and they must stand there to see it to their own great punishment. These good people whom they ridiculed during life: "They were those whom you held in derision formerly." They will burst with envy, "The sinner shall witness this and gnash his teeth." Ah! indeed we were fools, we were wrong! See that youth whom we laughed at so often because he was pious, and called him scrupulous or a bigot, because he never took part in our wicked talks, plays, and pastimes. There he is now, covered with glory and in triumph, while we are bound in chains, captives of the devil, and prisoners of hell. How foolish were we who considered their life absurd and their end without honor, but now we see them counted among the children of God and among the saints is their lot.

The wicked will say, "Yes, we have enjoyed the world and all its vanities, but what has it given us in return? Not happiness, not contentment; what a life of restlessness was ours! There is no peace for the wicked; we surfeited our souls and bodies with sin. Oh! had we done half as much to save our souls as we did to enjoy the illusive joys of our life on earth, we would be saints. 'We have grown tired in the way of iniquity and perdition, we have walked in difficult paths.'"

Then the saints, all robed in white, with palm branches in their hands in sign of triumph, will go joyfully to heaven, there to begin the eternal chant of paradise. The wicked, howling, blaspheming, and despairing, are caught in a terrible whirlpool that starts beneath their feet, sucking them down into eternal perdition: "And these shall go to eternal perdition but the just into life eternal."

In this way the great judgment will be accomplished; we shall all see one another in the valley of Jehosophat. I shall

see you and you shall see me. Shall we be on the right united with the saints, or shall we be found among the wicked, on the left? Alas, what a misfortune it would be if one of us were to be found among the ranks of the wicked! Shall I, your preacher, be found on the left, arrayed in sacerdotal garments, with the mark of the character of the priesthood impressed on my forehead? St. Jerome so feared this possibility that he retired into a cave and there meditated on the terrible sound of the trumpet which was to call him to judgment, and beat his breast with a rock till it became all livid with blows. "That dreadful voice rings still in my ears, I tremble with my whole body." Should not I, who am not a saint, but a humble priest, fear much more? O Jesus, trembling in every limb in fear of that day, I throw myself at Thy feet to implore mercy for myself and for my young hearers. Now Thou art the Father of mercy; then Thou shalt be the inexorable Judge; then it will be too late to ask for mercy. What am I, miserable wretch, going to say; whom will I engage as my patron, when even the just will tremble? Look upon us now, humble and contrite, asking for the pardon of our sins. Never again will we commit a sin, never again will we utter bad words or blasphemies or curses, nor go with bad companions. Dear Jesus, in Thy goodness make us faithful to Thee and let us not be separated from Thee. Remember, sweet Jesus, that for our salvation Thou didst come down from heaven. By the many sufferings Thou didst endure we pray Thee to have mercy on us and save us: we have cost Thee too much to be abandoned by Thy mercy. Yes; save us, save us, good God, God of mercy, of infinite goodness, save us!

Remember, dear Jesus, that Thou didst come to save me: do not then destroy me on that day: Fountain of all goodness, save me!

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

Gospel. *Matt.* xi. 2-10. *At that time:* When John had heard in prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples he said to him: Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another? And Jesus making answer said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them: And blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me. And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold, they that are clothed in soft garments, are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see? a prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: Behold, I send my Angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST SENDS HIS DISCIPLES TO CHRIST.

John the Baptist had been in prison some time; it was not for crime, but for the zeal he showed for the glory of God. Although you have heard the story many times, let us go over it again.

The impious Herod led a most scandalous life; everybody knew it, still no one dared reprove him for fear of incurring the hatred of this cruel man. But John the Baptist, to whom the glory of God was everything, did not hesitate to say to Herod, "There is a greater king than you, one whom you ought to respect, but whom you despise; it is not lawful to lead such a scandalous life: it is not right." John saw that this boldness drew upon him the anger of the king, and that in the end it would cost him his life; still he did not cease to say, "It is not right." Herod, to get rid of these reproofs, and instigated by the wicked Herodias, had John shut up in an obscure prison.

See then, my young people, the ardent zeal of John the Baptist for the honor and glory of God; the courage he

possessed to make a firm stand against vice. If you had but a little of the courage of this sainted man, how much evil could you hinder! When you are with that careless companion, who at play or at his work will break out into blasphemous words, have the courage to say to him, "It is not proper to talk like that, it is not lawful to curse; 'it is not right.'" If in church a young man stands beside you who instead of hearing Mass talks and laughs, can you not say to him, "This is the house of God, the house of prayer, it is a holy place and this light conduct is unseemly here"? If you see that he does not improve in his conduct, what should you do? why, tell his parents, consult with them as to the best means of leading him to a better life. You remember it is related that Joseph, having seen his brothers commit a most wicked act, told his father Jacob of it. If all young people would act that way, how many scandals would be avoided. How much good would be effected, even by a child who, when it hears the father's blasphemous tongue, would with a saddened countenance, but mildly and respectfully, say, "Father, it is not right for you to get into such a rage about so slight a matter."

Should the child see that the father troubles himself very little about the observance of Sunday, never approaches the sacraments not even at Easter; in short cares very little for the duties of religion, how much good might the child do by a quiet and determined remonstrance, saying, "Father, it is not right to live in this manner, oblivious of God and your soul." Should the child see meat on the table on days in which its use is forbidden, what a correction would it be if he said, "I do not eat meat on these days, because I respect the laws of the Church that forbid it. Alas, father and mother, what a dreadful thing you are doing! what scandal you are giving! can there be any blessing from almighty God on a family in which such things are done?"

John was in prison, as is stated in the Gospel, and there he heard of the works of Christ; he was struck with astonish-

ment at the great fame which Our Lord had acquired by His striking miracles. John sent two of his disciples to Our Lord to ask, "Art Thou He that art to come or look we for another?" John the Baptist knew very well that Christ was the Messias, but he wished to introduce his disciples to Our Lord that they might become His followers. While they were on this embassy they saw a great number of miracles and Our Lord took occasion to answer the questions of John: "Go," He said to them, "and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleaned, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them: and blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me." Such, then, are the miracles which Our Lord did for the human body; but still greater are those He works on the soul. How many sinners are spiritually blind, and He gives light to their intellects that they may understand the danger they are in! How many are spiritually lame; they do not walk in the path of virtue which is to lead them to heaven, but He cures them so that they run in the road of salvation and of life! How many sinners are spiritual lepers, covered from head to foot with loathsome ulcers of sin; He cleanses them; they become as white as snow. How many are dead to His grace; He raises them from this death and gives them true life. Many such miracles He has wrought on you and many such He is now working. Do you remember when you fell into mortal sin? You were blind, lame, leprous: you were dead to God, but God gave you sight and hearing when He infused into you the grace of desiring to make a good confession: "When we were in sin He revived us in Christ."

O, that you could recognize as you should the benefits which God has bestowed on you in calling you back to the life of grace! These are greater miracles than to give light to the eyes of the body or to make the deaf hear. St. Gregory affirms that it was a greater miracle to have converted St. Paul than to raise Lazarus to life. Thank God for those

favors you have received, and be grateful for them. Let me suggest another reflection which is very important. Our Redeemer manifested Himself as the true Messias by His good works; and should not also the Christian, who ought to be an imitator of Jesus, show that he is a follower of Our Lord by his works, and the sanctity of his life? But how many Christians are there who, instead of priding themselves on the friendship of Christ, become followers of the devil, are ashamed to imitate Christ and blaspheme His holy name! They are enemies of the cross of Christ. St. Augustine says, "Many are called Christians but they are not found to be connected with Christian works; they are called by a name which does not belong to them." These are Christians in name only. The true Christian is one who does good works and leads a pure life. St. Bernard says that Christians are called after Christ, and since they have inherited the name, they must also possess the sanctity.

You, O Catholic youth, show yourselves true followers of Christ by your virtuous lives. The first Christians did this; they boldly confessed Christ before the persecuting tyrants, in face of the most cruel torments.

The following example will serve to illustrate the courage of the early Christians. There was a beautiful but delicate young girl, Blandina by name, who was a slave. Her mistress, who was also a Christian and died a martyr's death, thought that Blandina would be frightened, and would not have the strength to profess herself a Christian; but the slave showed heroic courage and stood firm in her faith, though she tired out her executioners who tortured her cruelly day and night. All were astonished that such a delicate creature should live through torments that were enough to cause death in ordinary circumstances. "I am a Christian," Blandina said, "Christians abhor doing evil."

She went to her death with joy, as if going to a banquet; she was scourged, placed on a fiery chair, and then, inclosed in a net, she was set before an infuriated bull which tossed

her in the air. But the virgin martyr hardly felt the torments, for her mind was in heaven. At last she was beheaded, and pagans confessed that they had never witnessed such firmness, such indomitable patience. In this way the martyrs of the first ages of Christianity showed their love for Christ.

But let us return to our Gospel. The disciples of John the Baptist had gone away, and Our Lord turning to the multitude said, "When you went out into the desert to meet John the Baptist, what did you expect to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"

To how many young people can these words be applied? Many are slender reeds, which are shaken by the least breath of wind. The devil places before them some temptation, and at once they yield to his suggestion. A bad companion comes along and one is ready to join him in committing any sin. Now you see him weeping at the feet of his confessor for this sin, but to-morrow he is at his old habits again. To-day you see him praying devoutly to Mary or the saints, to-morrow you find him again pursuing unlawful pleasures. Sometimes you see him with a good book in his hand, but often he greedily devours bad ones. At one time he resolves to give up bad company, but soon you will find him with them again. Yes, they are slender reeds! The least difficulty in the service of God, and they forget their good resolutions.

Be ye therefore not slender reeds, but sturdy oaks that bend not to every wind that blows. Imitate the firmness of St. John the Baptist. Say with Job: "Thine, O Lord, I have resolved to be and Thine I shall remain." Take me, O Lord, from this world, rather than allow me to prove unfaithful to Thee. "What went ye out to see? a prophet? Yea I tell you and more than a prophet. Behold I send My angel before thy face who shall prepare thy way." What a beautiful encomium did John the Baptist receive from Our Lord! He calls him a prophet, and more than a prophet, an angel, a messenger of God. And truly St. John was an angel; a

messenger of God; an angel not in form but in deed, an angel, though a human being, on this earth; an angel, because he never lost the innocence which was granted him by special favor from his mother's womb; an angel, by his constant virginity and spotless purity.

O young man or young woman who have preserved your purity, you also are an angel. I rejoice with you. I beg of you, with all my heart, to remain always pure and innocent before God, and then with John the Baptist and the angels you will forever enjoy the vision of your Creator in heaven.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

GOSPEL. *John* i. 19-28. *At that time:* The Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites to John to ask him: Who art thou? And he confessed and did not deny: and he confessed: I am not the Christ. And they asked him: What then? Art thou Elias? And he said: I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered: No. They said therefore unto him: Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? what sayest thou of thyself? He said: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias. And they that were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him and said to him: Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet? John answered them, saying: I baptize with water; but there hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not. The same is he that shall come after me, who is preferred before me: the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose. These things were done in Bethania beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE life of John the Baptist is still continued in this Gospel. The appearance of John created quite a sensation in his time. By his retirement into the desert, by his austere penances, by his pure life, by the force of his preaching, he had attained such a reputation among the people of those

days, that they thought perhaps he was the Messias, the Saviour of the world. To clear away their doubts, they sent an embassy to him composed of priests and Levites, to ask him who he was. And he confessed and did not deny, and protested that he was not the Messias.

You understand from this, my good young people, that the saints humbled themselves the more, the greater honor they received. Not so with us poor sinners. Though on account of our many sins we are worthy of being despised, we look for the esteem of men, and are very much disturbed when any one looks upon us in our proper character, and does not give us the honor to which we have no claim.

But, my dear young people, let us not look for praise or flattery from men, who are very shortsighted in their judgment, and who frequently praise that with which they ought to find fault on good grounds. "Sons of men are foolish; they are lying in their weights, and they deceive themselves in their vanity." What would it be to you if men praised you and held you in high esteem, if before God you were wicked, miserable and poor in virtue? Seek then to please God; that should be your glory. "Oh! if you could understand," says the venerable Father Segneri, "how to appreciate the glory of God!" St. Ephrem held the esteem of men in such abomination, that at one time when he was praised, he became most uncomfortable, changed color, the sweat poured from his face with anguish, and he lost all power of utterance. St. Ignatius said he would rejoice to be considered crazy by every one. And when he was at the point of death, he told his companions who stood around his bed, to throw his body into any vile place, like a dog's. God's esteem is above all things. With His esteem you have at the same time the esteem of all the choirs of angels, who are more numerous than the atoms which compose the earth, the esteem of the Apostles, prophets, the martyrs, and of all the saints. Would you renounce all this glory to have the praise of poor miserable man? But to possess this glory from God you have to

be truly humble, since before God there is no vice more hateful than pride. To keep yourself always in this condition of mind, frequently ask yourself the question, "Who art thou?" You are indeed a Christian, but how much is lacking in you to be a good Christian? How far are you from those virtues which your holy profession demands? What little fervor, how impatient, how unmortified are you! "Who art thou?" Oh, that you would frequently make these reflections! You would keep yourself humble, you would know yourself thoroughly, and you would make great effort to remove all bad habits from your heart and acquire all the beautiful virtues of a Christian life.

The Jews had now heard and been convinced that John was not the Messias. "But who are you?" they asked again. "Are you Elias? Are you a prophet?" Even in this he refused himself a title. "If you are none of these, who are you? what do you say of yourself, for we must bring word to those who sent us." John the Baptist answered, "I am nothing but a voice crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord." What great humility is this! Yes, he was but a voice, but such a voice! A voice of thunder, a voice like a two-edged sword that was given by God and fitted by Him to open a way into the hearts of that hard-hearted and stubborn people. Are we not stubborn and hard-hearted, too, in our day? What a tremendous prophet would be needed to shake us out of the sleep of sin!

In this sacred time of Advent we hear preachers in the churches crying out, "O, ye people of God, prepare ye the way of the Lord!" But there are many sinners who will not be moved by these words. Are not these ministers of the Gospel angels whom God has sent to do the very work that John the Baptist was commissioned to perform? It is the duty of a priest to cry out; it is the duty of the people to listen. But, alas, you young man, you hear the voice of the priest: "Christmas is close at hand; prepare the way of the Lord; in order that He may come to your soul, cleanse it

from evil, cut off that bad friendship, keep away from that companion, shun that occasion of sin, make peace with God and with Jesus also, who wishes to come to your soul, and be born there again by grace." But how carelessly you listen to that invitation of God, who speaks to you by the voice of His priest, and you remain obstinate in your sins. Yes, my dear young people, if you hear God's voice, do indeed open your hearts and follow His instructions. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" you will say with a strong will. Therefore "If you hear His voice hearken."

St. Peter Damien tells of a very wicked man who had two great vices; one was ambition, which brooked no opposition from anybody, and hence he was the personal enemy of any that opposed him; the other vice was impurity, which sunk him into the most filthy excesses. His conscience reproved him all the time and the fear of death often made him tremble; but to these pious relics of a good education, he would say: "Some other time I shall give this up." Several times he was on the point of going to confession, but the old habit of putting off the execution of his resolution prevailed. He was found dead; he had died impenitent.

But to prepare the way of Our Lord still better, not only will you remove every sin and the stain of it, but you will also imitate the life of John the Baptist. St. Augustine, speaking of St. John, says, "In the Baptist all is voice, that admonishes us to listen." His silence in the desert is a voice that tells us not to talk too much, especially of things which offend God. His fast is a voice, that preaches loudly against the excesses of eating and drinking, of which we are frequently guilty, especially in Lent and on fast days, caring nothing for the law of abstinence; thus giving grave scandal to bad Catholics. The camel's-hair covering with which John was scantily clothed in order to do penance, is a loud voice against too great delicacy toward the body. His retirement to the desert is a voice that is raised against our continual dissipation.

St. John preached so well, by the example of every virtue, that the people learned to give up sin, to do good, and to devote themselves to the service of God.

If you young people would be less dissipated and distracted in your life, your life, too, would be a living voice to your companions, preaching to them. If you were respectful to your superiors, you would teach obedience and submission. Certainly the life of a good young man is a great lesson to others; if he is obedient, devout, sensible, decent, and quiet, his companions will become the same. A good life is a sermon to our father, mother, and superiors; yes, even to the priest, for seeing the young man pious, sensible and devout, frequenting the sacraments, always going to church on Sundays and holydays of obligation he will become edified and strengthened in his work for souls. Thus a youth will sanctify a family, a home, a school and his companions.

Now listen to an example which shows how a good son was the means of saving his father. This father had many sons; the oldest was so pious and so accustomed from his childhood to be quiet and retired, that the father could not endure him, but ridiculed him on all occasions. The boy, however, did not change his demeanor. When the time of the father's death approached, all thought he would disinherit the son, but the father, who had reflected on the injustice he had committed against this young man, had him brought to his bedside, and with tears he said: "Forgive me, my son, and pray almighty God to forgive me too. You sought the glory of Jesus Christ, but I had no other thought than of the things of this world." He then sent for his other sons, and turning to his good son said: "Here is your father, and your master; do what he tells you, I leave my property in his hands to divide among you as he wishes; this is my last will." These words made an impression on all present. When the father was dead the good son divided the property among his brothers, but his own share he gave to the poor. Then he went away and built a little cell, there to pass the

remainder of his days. Thus it was that the beautiful life of the son was a lesson to the father, and the cause of his happy death.

In the same manner let your life be such before men, that it will edify them and be a direct war on sin, as was the life of John the Baptist.

The Pharisees who were on this embassy to John, were not quite satisfied, and they said: "If you are not Christ, or Elias, or a prophet, why then do you baptize?" "I," he answered, "baptize only in water as a preparation for the Baptism which will take away sins, and which will be given by another who is already among you and you do not know Him. He is the One who is to come after me, but who was already before me, the latchet of whose shoe I am unworthy to loose."

How many young people could apply to themselves the same reproof! You have Jesus, the Saviour, among you, and you know Him not. If you knew Him would you not visit Him, would you not adore Him in His holy tabernacle, would you not approach frequently His sacred table? How many young people live in forgetfulness of Our Lord! they rarely visit Him, and hardly know that they should genuflect before Him when He is exposed to public worship.

Our Lord is with us also in another way; that is by His presence in our hearts. Make an effort to know Him, and remember always the presence of God. Which of you in the presence of a king would dare to perform even an act of incivility? Remembering that you are seen by God, strive to honor Him by acts of love, adoration and gratitude for the many mercies He has shown you. Since He is a king who wishes to reign in your heart, and to do you much good, permit Him to direct your will and your actions in the ways of His providence. Ask Him to assist you, to give you strength in temptation, to give you courage in your labors, and to make you rich in your poverty. Never lose sight of your King; you will thus surely love Him with all your

heart, and He will never cease to pour upon you the abundance of His graces. At the hour of your death, Jesus will console you, He will be your last food in the viaticum; and when your friends will stand near you, unable to help you, Jesus will be there to assist you in your last agony.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

GOSPEL. *Luke* iii. 1-6. Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip his brother tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilina, under the high-priests Annas and Caiphas: the word of the Lord was made unto John the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins, as it was written in the book of the sayings of Isaias the prophet: A voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled: and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

THE BAPTISM OF PENANCE.

THE day is close upon us on which the Messias, the Saviour of the world, the King of the people, the Prince of peace, the Desired of nations, is to appear on the earth.

Christmas is near. You, my children, must make every effort to prepare the way for the coming of Our Saviour. When a great king is about to visit a city, what a commotion and bustle there is! Every one makes the most magnificent preparations in his power. Our duty is not to a monarch of this world, but to the King of kings, the omnipotent God of heaven and earth.

You understand, then, that it is certainly necessary to make some preparation. St. John was sent to indicate what preparation is to be made, and you ought to think of his directions and follow them.

St. John the Baptist, by the inspiration of God, left the desert which he had inhabited for thirty years, and betook himself to the banks of the river Jordan. John, who in all that time had seldom spoken to any one, boldly began to preach penance, inviting the people who flocked to him to be baptized as a sign of the amendment of their lives. "Do penance," he cried, "for the kingdom of God is at hand." Well fitted was he to preach that penance of which he had become master. His appearance indicated the mortified man; a girdle of leather bound his body; his shoulders were covered with camel's hair; he lived in no house, but under the open sky, suffering cold and heat, winds and rain. His food was locusts and wild honey, water was his drink. Such a prodigy of self-denial from his very infancy, as if he came from another world, certainly drew the attention of the religiously inclined. Even soldiers and publicans came to him attracted by his austerity, and asked what they should do. Every condition of life was represented; every sex, every age; all were there, and repeated the same question. They confessed their sins and did penance. This is what you ought to do to prepare the way of the Lord.

I know indeed, my dear children, that while you have preserved your innocence it is not necessary that I should insist very particularly on penance; but what child is there that has not known what sin is, and therefore I am right in preaching penance even to you.

But I would certainly not ask you to do any of the heroic penances such as John the Baptist practiced. For great and older sinners great penances are necessary, and they have practiced them, as you know from history. Mary Magdalen, St. Peter, St. Paul. The great act of penance which is required even of you is to make a humble confession at the feet of the servant of God in the confessional.

But even this light mark of penance does not come easy to some young people who have already fallen into sin. After having committed the sins, they hide them in their breasts;

shame closes their mouths to the confessor; when asked about them they deny having committed them. To such I will say: "It is either confession or damnation." The alternative is not hard to choose, but you will find many who would rather be damned than generously declare their sins.

The priest never thinks less of the penitent who makes a clear confession. A youth once went to confession to St. Francis de Sales. He had horrible sins to tell, but he confessed them sincerely and with sorrow. When the confession was over he said to the saint with a blush: "Father, what must you think of me when you hear of such enormous sins?" "My son," answered the saint, embracing him, "what do I think of you? I think you are a saint. A moment ago you were a real devil, but now God has pardoned you and you are a saint."

If this was the thought of a saint about his penitent, why should you blush to tell all your sins in confession? But should you still feel a repugnance when you go to confession address yourself to Mary, and she will obtain for you the grace of a sincere and open confession.

There was once a girl who had committed a fault and had not the courage to confess it. For eight years she carried that unhappy ulcer of sin about her on her conscience. Though she knew it was a mortal sin, still she went to confession and communion. Outwardly she was calm, but her heart was torn by unbearable remorse. She looked happy, but she was far from being so. At last on Annunciation day she knelt before the image of our mother Mary and cried most bitterly, begging her to gain her grace to tell this fault. She obtained the grace and lived a saintly life afterwards.

There are many who confess their sins indeed, but not with sorrow; it is only by word of mouth they detest them.

What did you do when you committed that wicked deed? You offended a good God who has created you, preserved and redeemed you, and for no other reason than to satisfy the demands of a vile passion and degrading habit; and by so

doing you deprived yourself of God's grace, you refused Him His honor and glory, you gave yourself over to the power of Satan. Can you find a youth who will take such a view of sin? Very seldom.

This is the kind of penance which St. John wants when he says, "Do penance. Bring forth fruits worthy of penance." And thus it is that the young man who has not a real sorrow for his faults continues to live in sin, and though ostensibly repenting of his sins commits them over and over.

What kind of repentance is this? True repentance demands a real sorrow for sin, and the resolution not to commit it again.

What must be foremost in the penitent's mind is the hatred of sin, the abomination of that which is so evil, however pleasing it may be to our senses. What hatred is there for a sin that is committed again? Let us suppose that a Jew is going to become a Christian. What great consolation such an event is to all. The day approaches when he is to be baptized. He goes to the church and there is a great feast made. But soon he returns to the belief of the Synagogue. What a disappointment, what a feeling of disgust, yes, even of hatred, at such a miserable wretch! If he believed in the faith of Jesus Christ, the true one, why did he leave it? If false, why did he become a Christian? But after a while he declares he believes again in Christ and yet, for a second time, he perverts and becomes a Jew. Would you say that he was ever a real Christian? No indeed; he pretended to be one, he was always a Jew, he never had the true faith.

Let us apply this to ourselves. Can you really call him penitent who to-day confesses his sins and says he repents of them, but who never, even for a moment, breaks off his attachment to sin, and to-morrow wilfully commits the same sins again? Does he not clearly prove that he loves his sins? This is making a mockery of God. The Lord compares such repentance to the dog that returns to its vomit. St. Paul says that such people despise the kindness of God. Will those who thus continue to sin ever have the peace of God in their

souls? Oh, no! The holy peace of a pardoned sinner God gives only to the just, to His friends, not to those who return again and again to their sins. Can they expect the blessing of God at the birth of the divine Infant? No, but they may be sure that maledictions will descend upon them.

My dear children, do all you can to prepare the way of Our Lord; with the Prophet Ezechiel I say to you, "Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities; cast away from you all your transgressions by which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit." With St. Augustine I call on you to prepare the way of the Lord by ornamenting your souls with the magnificent virtues of sobriety, chastity, and charity. You must make yourselves worthy to receive the loving caresses of the Child Jesus, not only by being sober in eating and drinking, but by being careful and sober in speaking, careful about the books you read. With sobriety practice purity, too. You know how highly Our Lord values that virtue, for He would have no other than an immaculate Mother and He Himself was called the immaculate Lamb. Your thoughts must be pure, also your looks, your words, your affections, and all your actions. By them show a pure and innocent heart. With all this you must not forget great love and charity, for what are all virtues without the love of God? St. Augustine shows us in many places how we should love Our Lord. With this great doctor let us say, "I love Thee, O Saviour, I desire to love Thee more. Thou art an infinite God and therefore Thou deservest to be loved with an infinite love. Sweet Infant Jesus, come to my heart, and do not delay any longer."

Thus the saints loved, and the Child Jesus was so pleased with the tenderness of their love that He sometimes visited them and spoke to them words of love.

St. Gustave at the approach of Christmas felt such a love for the coming of Our Lord, that the Blessed Virgin herself came from heaven and placed the Infant Jesus in his arms on Christmas night.

St. Laurence Justinian, when he said Mass one Christmas, fell into an ecstasy at the consecration and stood there like one turned to stone. When the acolyte saw this, he went up to him and pushed him, so as to rouse him. The saint started as if wakened from a heavy slumber and said: "Why, yes, I will go on with the Mass, but what is to be done with this beautiful child?"

What a glorious thing would it not be to have such a love for Our Lord! We would then know how to prepare for the birth of the Child Jesus. We would hardly need any instructions, because love would tell us what to do. He would come and make His throne in our hearts. He would fulfil all our wishes, and give us great graces.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS.

GOSPEL. *Luke* ii. 33-40. *At that time Joseph, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus,* were wondering at those things, which were spoken concerning him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother: Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was far advanced in years, and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow until fourscore and four years; who departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day. Now she at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord; and spoke of him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel. And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, into their city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom: and the grace of God was in him.

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE.

CHRISTMAS is over; with the angels we have sung the beautiful anthem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." We have witnessed the tears of the Child Jesus, but we know that those tears were

tears of love, and for that reason they did not distress us, but gave us consolation.

To-day, with the joy of Christmas still in our hearts, we come with the Holy Family and other pious people to the Temple to witness the ceremony of the Presentation. The first time Our Lord goes out into the world, He directs His Mother to carry Him to church. The moral I wish to draw from this Gospel, dear young people, is, that you should think much of the house of God on earth. We must also imitate the example of Christ and while in church beg our dear Lord to inflame our souls more and more with His holy love.

There are many who do not love the Church, through some depravity of heart, or the bad example of others. Will such be dear to Jesus? Will He love such as these? Jesus weeps for them.

Mary and Joseph heard the great prophecy which Simeon had spoken; they wondered at it, they thanked God for the light bestowed upon Simeon, and also that they had been made instruments of His divine providence.

We, too, my dear young people, must rejoice at the honors which God gives His Son, as we must weep when we see Him suffer. Yes, when you see Our Lord honored, feel joyful and be happy; when you see Him despised, be sad of heart. Is not this Jesus your good God? your beloved Redeemer who shed His precious blood for you? Can you witness the outrages which are heaped upon Him without resenting them, or at least trying to hinder them? What would you say of a son who saw his father badly used, and looked on carelessly and coldly? Should not a boy feel a natural impulse to defend his father by word and deed? Well, he that loves Jesus Christ should at least feel compassion when His holy religion is insulted. St. Teresa once said that a soul which loves Our Lord would sooner die than see Him despised or neglected. Elias the prophet, not to witness the wickedness of the Jewish people, hid himself in a cave, and there

prayed that God would take him out of this life rather than he should see Him offended.

After Simeon had congratulated Mary and Joseph on their glorious future, he spoke of the sorrows that awaited Mary. "This child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."

What a terrible prophecy this! Is it possible that this Child, who has come to this world for the salvation of His people, should indeed be the cause of the damnation of many? To whom will He be a ruin? to many in Israel, in the true church. He will be a ruin to infidels and heretics who will not believe in Him; a ruin to the proud who will not bow their heads in humility and faith, and to many Christians. But what Christians will be damned by the coming of Christ? Those who are so only in name; who do the works of the heathen and live in sin; who offend and blaspheme Our Lord, even though they were brought up Catholics. This divine Infant will also be the ruin of many young people, of those who from their earliest childhood cared little for Him, drove Him from their hearts to make room for the devil. He will be the utter ruin of those who, not content to lead bad lives themselves, lead others astray by giving bad example or by bad conversation. The divine Infant is presented to-day in the Temple. There is nothing dreadful about Him now; but one day they shall see Him, fierce as a lion; they shall see Him as a God, scattering His thunderbolts among sinners; He will demand of them the strictest account of all their works, of all the souls they have ruined, and of whose eternal damnation they have been the cause. May this prophecy not be realized in you. Then it will be too late to please Him; no more time for mercy, but for justice.

There was once a young man at the point of death, who had led a bad life; the priest came and presented the crucifix

to him to kiss, saying, "Here, my son, is your hope." The young man fixed his eyes on the cross and said, "Yes, you say truly, He is my hope, but He is now the cause of my despair," and these were his last words.

Be you, my dear young people, faithful to Jesus, try to know Him well, do not offend Him, but love Him with a great love; then He will be your salvation and eternal life.

But, O Mary, my mother, what is that prophecy which Simeon makes concerning you: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce"? In her subsequent life we see the prophecy verified. A sword of sorrow pierced her very soul, when she saw her divine Son insulted, made an object of hatred, crowned with thorns, and cruelly nailed to a cross. Our minds cannot realize the pain which Mary had to suffer. We know that our sins have been the cause of the Passion and death of Our Lord. Let us, therefore, weep all our life for the sins we have committed, and not renew the Passion of Our Lord or the sufferings of Mary. The Blessed Virgin once appeared to St. Lutgard, looking very sad; the saint asked her why it was so. Mary replied, "How can I be joyful when so many, day after day, give me new cause of sorrow by again crucifying my most holy Son?" She also appeared to Blessed Nicoletta Franciscana with her Child covered with terrible wounds, and said, "See how sinners treat my Son, inflicting on Him mortal wounds, and giving me also fresh cause of sorrow." St. Alphonsus says that when we sin we take the hammer, and most unmercifully pierce the hands and feet of Jesus with nails, and then we turn on Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and plunge the sword of sorrow deep into her soul.

But let us follow the story of the Gospel: There was in the Temple at the same time a woman, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Aser; she was eighty years old, and after the death of her husband, had remained about the Temple serving the priests and engaged in prayer; she knew Our Lord at once, adored Him, and proclaimed Him the Saviour;

then, filled with the Holy Ghost, she told them of the marvels of God's mercy, who had at last sent the Messias.

You see, my dear young people, how that holy woman who served Our Lord in silence and retirement, deserved so great a grace, so great a light of inspiration, as to be enabled to know Jesus. You, also, should love retirement, love to be near Our Lord in the Temple; speak often to Jesus in prayer, and then the Saviour will bring light to your souls, and speak to your hearts words of eternal life.

But there is something else to be considered in the story of this saintly old woman. We have in our cities and villages many who imitate this St. Anna. Let me say something in praise of these: they would willingly remain in the church, day and night, if they were permitted. We call them devotees. They are peculiar in their ways, considered crazy, derided by the good and bad as useless people; but perhaps they are high in the esteem of God. God gives more light to the simple and unpretending than to the philosophers who are puffed up with the pride of their intellect, and use it only to despise what they do not approve. You remember that beautiful story of St. Catharine; she had a great dispute with some learned professors in one of the universities of Alexandria, Egypt, and in the presence of the Emperor Maximian, she so convinced them of their errors, that many became Christians and afterwards suffered martyrdom. It is told of another martyr, who was a poor ignorant man, a laborer in the field, but who had studied Our Lord crucified; this man, when he had been judged guilty of disrespect to the gods and was condemned to death, made such a grand appeal to the emperor, that the tyrant himself acknowledged he was acting only from hatred of the Christian religion and not for the love of truth. These devotees in the sight of the world are useless, but we know that they have consecrated their lives to the service of God. There are also monks and nuns who spend much of their time in prayer. Are these people to be called pious idlers? Do they

encumber the face of the earth, and should they be scattered as they have been in some countries? O, how poor and miserable human beings are! They let vice walk openly in the world, and take little trouble about it; but when poor Religious gather together to pray, it makes them desperate, and they do not stop until they have succeeded in suppressing them.

The Gospel ends by telling us that Our Lord lived at Nazareth, and grew in age and grace before God and man. My dear young people, strive to grow in goodness, in virtue, and in sanctity, for it is the will of God that we all should be saints.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *Luke* ii. 42-52. *When Jesus* was twelve years old they going up into Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and his parents knew it not. And thinking that he was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding him, they returned into Jerusalem seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers. And seeing him, they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said to them: How is it that you sought me? did you not know that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men.

THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE.

THIS day's Gospel is especially adapted for children, who can draw from it, even in their humble way of thinking, many useful lessons. The law of Moses commanded every

man of the Hebrew nation to go to the Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. When Jesus was twelve years old, having come to the use of reason according to human judgment, He went to Jerusalem with His parents. During the seven days of the feast they remained in the city; then they went back to Nazareth. In those days it was customary for those who attended the Passover to travel in separate bands; the men in one, the women in another, while the children could accompany either. Mary thought that Jesus was with Joseph, and Joseph thought He was with Mary, so, not at all uneasy, they journeyed homeward. When in the evening they came together at the khan, it became evident that the Child Jesus was lost or left in Jerusalem. Realize, if you can, the dreadful anguish of the heart of Mary at that time. To feel with her on this occasion, we should keep before our minds the tender love she bore Jesus.

My dear children, have you ever lost Jesus? Who knows how often? How many times have you ignominiously put Him out of your hearts by sin? You have brought the devil in with great pomp, and placed the demon on the throne which God should occupy. Mary and Joseph lost Our Lord Jesus without their fault; you lost Him because you made up your minds you would no longer keep company with Jesus. And when you had put away this beloved Jesus did you feel the loss? I know that young people who for the first time have lost Jesus by sin really feel that they have committed a horrible crime. They are tormented in mind and troubled within themselves, fearing, indeed, that the house may tumble over their heads and crush them, or that the earth may open and swallow them. They can find no rest, until they have recourse to confession and have driven out the devil and reinstated Our Lord. But there are many youths, on the contrary, who do not feel the sting of conscience, or are surprised if they do; who never consider their horrible condition, and remain in it for months and years. Jesus is always near them, even when sent away, and

looks to get back into the soul. His voice is not silent. He tells the poor sinner to open his heart, that He wants to enter there. But many have made a compact with the devil; they have sworn fealty to him and him they wish to serve and no other, because he gives them so many opportunities of gratifying their passions. These souls think they may let Jesus stand beside them, unnoticed, until the end of their lives and that then they will be converted. But they will not find Him then, because they have abused the grace of God. If any of you have lost Our Lord, lose no time in finding Him at once. And you, my good young people, who have kept Our Lord in your hearts, O, keep Him there with tenderness and love, as your greatest treasure; beg of Him most sincerely to keep you near Him. Cultivate in your souls the virtues of humility, obedience, purity, patience, mortification, and charity, that Jesus, charmed by these precious virtues, may remain with you always.

Mary and Joseph were very anxious and could not rest, but immediately returned to Jerusalem, knowing that nowhere but there and in the Temple would He be found. And there He was sitting, with the doctors attentive around Him: the Child was a prodigy, and excited their admiration; they listened to His explanations of the law, they asked Him questions, and clearly and authoritatively came back the answers. It was an admirable instruction that Our Lord gave them.

Mary and Joseph found Our Lord in the Temple. My dear young people, if your parents were to look for you during the day or night, would they find you in church or in good company, passing the time in pious conversation? Or would they find you with bad company, engaged in bad conversation, drinking, cursing, blaspheming, perhaps?

As soon as Mary saw Jesus she said to Him, "Son, why hast Thou done so to us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Our Lord answered her: "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be

about My Father's business?" This answer has a very deep meaning. Jesus was the Son of Mary and had come into the world to work for the honor of God His Father, and to do great things for His service.

The Child Jesus gives us a great example; He teaches us a great lesson: how we should act toward our parents. We must rather obey God than them, when there is question of the glory and honor of God. You must not be afraid to go to your parents, and lay before them the will of God as you understand it. Sometimes parents are very worldly, and enemies of God's glory in regard to their children; they have views of the future for them which are not at all of God, and consequently should not be followed. There are parents who would rather see their children miserably unhappy for life than to see them become Religious dedicated to the service of God. For example, if any of you, my dear young people, feel that God calls you, that you are fitted for the religious life, that you have patience and fortitude to persevere, then follow the call from God. Many young men who have served the altar from early youth have felt that they had a vocation to consecrate themselves to God; but they resisted, remained in the world, fell into sin, and were lost to their faith. Some young women who have the vocation, instead of leaving the paternal roof and going into a convent, marry and live unhappily to the end of their days. Had these young people consecrated themselves to God they would have done much for the glory of God, they would have been glorious instruments in promoting the interests of the Church. St. Augustine wrote to his most intimate friend, Lucius, begging him to embrace a religious life. "See what magnificent talents are going to waste on this foolish world! What a pity that such a bright intellect should amount to so very little. The devil has taken hold of you, and is going to ruin you. Supposing you found a chalice in the street; what would you do with it? you would bring it to the church because it belongs there. You have received

golden talents from God; then say 'good-by' to the devil, and attach yourself to God."

St. Stanislaus Kostka considered it one of the greatest faults of his life, that, having felt for certain the call of God in his heart to leave the world, he waited for six months, at the risk of abusing the Lord's friendship and the inestimable grace of the divine vocation.

Beg of God with heartfelt sincerity to let you know His holy will; pray to Mary, your angel guardian, and the saints of paradise, that they may intercede with the Holy Ghost for you, so that you may know your duty. Take counsel with your confessor, do not act foolishly, but when you are once certain of what you should do, cut off all ties, howsoever tender they be, and whatever else might place obstacles in the way. Turn a deaf ear to the devil, the world, and the flesh; be prompt as was the boy Samuel, who when God called him, jumped from bed several times, saying, "Here I am, Lord; you have called me."

Jesus returned with Mary and Joseph to Nazareth, to the humble station that He held. The Gospel tells us in very short words what was His principal occupation during these years of His boyhood and youth; He obeyed His parents. You may see Him in the poor carpenter shop of Nazareth, with His saw and ax, working zealously, gaining His livelihood by the work of His hands until He reached His thirtieth year. He was God, that God who governs the heavens and the earth. O children, headstrong, wilful, and independent, learn from Jesus obedience to your parents. Do not cause them to weep over your bad lives, bringing their gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. Honor your parents, love them with a tender and true love, be their delight, and you will have such a reward from God as will astonish you.

Jesus grew in wisdom, in age, and grace before God and before man: He was wisdom itself, and how could He grow in wisdom? He was sanctity itself, and how could He be more holy? Still, adapting Himself to our humanity, with every

day He manifested those qualities more and more, as suited His age. And people knew this Child and loved Him. What a grace it was for relatives and neighbors to be acquainted with the carpenter's Son!

But let us make our reflections. Do our youths grow in piety, devotion, wisdom, and love of God as they advance in years? While children they are good and lovable, but as they reach the years of manhood or womanhood what becomes of their innocence, their obedience, their loveliness? They have made themselves the slaves of the devil; the devil does not practice such virtues and neither do they. What has become of your devotion? You used to say your beads, and pray morning and night, and had devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Do you still pray to her, or do you not consider this, as well as all other devotions, foolish practices? You had a very tender conscience as a child; the least sin would give you concern, you had much to confess; now it seems that sin does not disturb you, you are as gay after a great sin as if nothing had happened; you do not feel the qualms of conscience, you never go to confession any more. Why do you not act as formerly? The fact is, you have already partially lost your faith, and be assured it will not be long before you will have lost it altogether. Such then is the wickedness of your life. In a few years you will be hardened in sin, you will be worse than the Turks or the pagans. How many such youths are there? Who would believe it unless they had seen it with their own eyes? What a feeling of disappointment it is to all religious educators, when they see all their efforts wasted.

O you young people, who are still good, pray for them that Our Lord may convert them and bring them back to a sense of their duty. Recommend to Our Lord those who were your companions in doing good, but now, by their bad example, would make you, too, unfaithful to God. St. Celarinus had a sister who had yielded to the fury of the persecution, and offered sacrifice to the idols. When he

heard of this miserable fear, he clothed himself in sackcloth and fasted severely; even on Easter days he did not cease praying to God that the grace of conversion might be granted her, and he resolved to do this penance until he saw her again reconciled to the Church. St. Dominic prayed whole nights for the conversion of sinners and did penances for them. St. Francis Xavier was so zealous for the conversion of sinners that he went about the city of Molacca ringing a bell and crying out in a loud voice, that all should pray for those in mortal sin. Do you also pray for those companions of your own age who once were brothers and sisters of Our Lord, but now are slaves of Satan? who at one time went with you to the banquet of the immaculate Lamb, but now live in union with the devil? As for yourselves, stand firm in your faith, be vigilant that you may not fall into the sins of the wicked, grow in grace, in purity, in virtue, in wisdom, in the love of God, and you shall be dear to Our Lord, dear to all mankind, and it will be said of you as it was said of Jesus: "He grew in wisdom, in age, and in grace before God and men."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *John* ii. 1-11. *At that time* there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is to me and to thee? my hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six water-pots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them: Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them: Draw out now and carry to the chief steward of the feast. And they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water: the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him: Every man at first setteth forth

good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and he manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF CANA.

We are all astonished at the fact that Our Lord was present at the marriage feast of Cana. It is truly wonderful that Our Lord, who practiced mortification in so heroic a degree; who gave us such an example of penitential life, should at the very outset of His public career visit a marriage feast. It was that same Jesus who had just completed His fast of forty days and nights and who afterwards said, "Take up your cross and follow Me," who went as an invited guest to this banquet at which it is usual to find such joyfulness, where language is sometimes unrestrained, where modesty is often not observed, where sobriety and temperance in eating and drinking are not to be found.

My dear children, change your surprise into wonder; for Our Lord wished to be there so as to approve an honest marriage tie, and to show that it is a great sacrament; and at the same time to show that only that marriage is holy and pleasing to God where at least in the hearts of the assembled guests Jesus and Mary are found, and that such a marriage is under His special protection and will receive His divine blessing.

It is certain that at this feast there were those who were good and simple, and that there certainly would be no disorder. Had it been one of those meetings which the worldly and rich of this world attend, Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin would not have been there.

Should any of you ever be invited to such a feast, think, before you accept the invitation, if those who ask you are good people who observe the law of God; will there be people there who are good and temperate? If you cannot decline the invitation be on your guard; keep a watch over

your eyes and over your thoughts, and above all be temperate, especially in drink.

The guests were reclining at the repast; and as it was going on it was noticed that the wine was giving out. Mary soon observed it, and in order that the newly married couple should be spared the shame of making known their poverty, she turned to Our Lord and said to Him, "They have no wine."

Mary is really the Mother of providence. If she was so solicitous about the wine, how much more anxious will she be in our spiritual needs? O Mary, you have a tender heart! You will surely feel for us, afflicted with such evils; you will help and console us, defend us against the infernal enemy, and you will throw your mantle over us.

But if we expect to find all these qualities in Mary, we must honor and love her, and be her tender and devout children. Mary once said to a youth that was praying: "I feel little concern in your prayers, for you keep impurity in your heart."

Never offend the purest of virgins by committing an act of impurity. Be proper and decent; grow every day in devotion to her. Are you growing cold in her service? Think of her more frequently, and when you go to church pray to her; she is there near the tabernacle, for where Jesus is, there also is His Mother. If you have no devotion, and are careless about her, it seems as if you said, "Forget me, O Mother! I am going to follow the world; I will not be bothered with the thought of you in the future." And when no more graces come to you; when blindness in your faith and carelessness in practicing it has taken hold of you, you need not be surprised, for you are going away from God.

Thomas à Kempis, when a child, had the habit of saying every day a prayer in honor of Mary; but by carelessness he at first forgot it and after a while never thought of it more. Mary, who on her part loved young Thomas, appeared to him one night as he dreamed that he was with some compan-

ions. The Blessed Virgin was very kind, affable even, to the young men, but when she approached Thomas, who thought he too would receive signs of love from her, she said, "What! Do you expect a sign of love and regard from me? Have you not forgotten me? Go away! My kindnesses are not for such as you." The vision or dream was over, but it made such a great impression on the youth's mind that he began his devotions again and was careful not to omit them in the future.

Mary, having told Jesus that the wine was out, He answered: "Woman, what is to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come." If this answer had been given to any one of us, we surely would have despaired of having our petition granted. But Mary did not think so. She was, in fact, sure He was going to work a miracle, for she went to the servants and told them to do everything He commanded.

Did Our Lord wish to seem harsh to His Mother, and not listen to her prayer? He was not harsh nor disrespectful. Immediately, though His hour had not yet come, He heard her prayer. The Lord does the same to us. Often He seems not to hear our prayers, in fact He acts as if He did not want to hear them. But He does hear them nevertheless, and gives us a great deal more than we have asked for. God does His work of kindness to man as He wants us to do our works of charity, quietly and in secret; so that the left hand may not know what the right hand does.

And still it may really be a fact that He does not hear our prayer, for the simple reason that we do not pray in the right manner. We must pray with attention; our whole soul must be on the subject of our prayer; we must pray with unlimited confidence in God's power, kindness, and willingness; at the same time always add a little prayer that God may keep you from sin, which is the greatest gift He can give you. Add this to your other petitions and your prayer will appear less selfish; God will grant you much for this consideration.

Read this example of long-continued prayer. For seventeen years St. Monica prayed for the conversion of Augustine, her son. The more she prayed the deeper he seemed to fall into heresy and sin. Monica followed him everywhere with motherly love, and continued her prayers. At last she was heard—but how? She obtained a great deal more than she asked for. He went to the church and was baptized by St. Ambrose. Nor was this all. He was shortly afterwards made a priest, and then a bishop. Monica asked only for his conversion, but this was too little for God, who had heard her prayer. He prepared the way for greater gifts and graces. He became the scourge of heretics, a column of the Church, a doctor teaching all nations, and a great saint. The prayer of St. Monica was well made. From this you can form a very good idea how prayers should be said.

At the wedding of Cana there were in the house six large stone water-pots. Our Lord then said to the servants: "Fill the water-pots with water," and they filled them to the brim. "Take some to the master of the servers and let him taste." The water had been made wine at that instant. They were astonished; it was a remarkable miracle. The wine was even better than that which they had had. Our Lord worked this miracle at the prayer of the Blessed Virgin for the consolation of a poor family. For the happiness of good people He worked His first miracle and manifested His divine power.

It was the custom in those days to give the best wine first, and when men had well drunk then that which was poorer.

The world gives us pleasures, honors, and riches in our youth. But at the end of life, when we see that we have lost so much time, that great treasure which is only appreciated at death, the bad wine of sorrow and regret is served. That will be the bitter wine—perhaps of repentance, perhaps of despair. But for the good Our Lord reserves at the end the wine of happiness, the memory of our sweet communions, of devotions to Mary, and of what we have suffered for Jesus.

In peace we will close our eyes to the light of this world to open them to the brightness of paradise.

Be not fond of the wine of the world, which intoxicates and renders us foolish, but follow Our Lord and Saviour, who will give us the spiritual wine of divine consolation. When the world shall have left us, Jesus alone will remain with us, and that will be all that we can desire.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* viii. 1-13. *At that time* when Jesus was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him: and behold a leper came and adored him, saying: Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, stretching forth his hand, touched him, saying: I will, be thou made clean. And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith to him: See thou tell no man: but go show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them. And when he had entered into Capharnaum, there came to him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying: Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented. And Jesus saith to him: I will come and heal him. And the centurion, making answer, said: Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers; and I say to this: Go, and he goeth; and to another: Come, and he cometh; and to my servant: Do this, and he doth it. And Jesus hearing this, marvelled; and said to them that followed him: Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel. And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said to the centurion: Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee. And the servant was healed at the same hour.

THE LEPER—THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION.

ONCE when Our Lord was coming down from a mountain, followed by a great crowd of people, He entered the city of

Capharnaum. At the city gates there was a poor leper, who, bowing down profoundly, addressed Jesus and cried out: "Lord! if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

Leprosy is a very filthy, disgusting disease. The whole body is covered with a false dry skin like scales, so that the person becomes a most hideous and loathsome object. In the East and in this country, too, leprosy is considered contagious, and the laws of sanitary boards separate people afflicted with it from those that are well, and will not allow lepers to come into the cities. This picture is but a very insignificant description of leprosy. You must see it to know how loathsome it really is.

When you read the description of leprosy think of that other kind of leprosy of the soul, for sin is the leprosy of the soul, and is as filthy and more so than the leprosy of the body. Yes, it is the leprosy of sin that makes the soul a horrible sight before God and the angels. The leprous souls that live in so many human bodies in cities and villages are not subject to any laws. They can remain where they please, and still we know that nothing is more contagious than the leprosy of sin. Thus it is that sin is continually growing and spreading, until we find it in every nook and corner of the world. How rare it is to find youths not infected with some vice or other! How few are untouched by this contagion, or who have preserved their baptismal innocence!

If you are already covered with the leprosy of sin, ah, then cry out: "Lord, you see how miserable my condition is! Heal me—cleanse me. You see that my mouth is infected because such bad words, blasphemies, and curses are continually flowing from it. You see, O Lord, that my body and my senses are infected with this terrible disease, for it induces the soul to commit the sins of impurity." If you pray in this manner, humbly and confidently, you will hear in your soul the consoling words, "Yes, I will help you to overcome that vice. I will forgive you and give you the grace of remaining good."

But Our Lord adds: "Go and show yourselves to the priest." The priest is the minister of God. He will extend his hands over you, and you will be made whiter than snow. You will start up into a new life, in which you will acquire again the merits of your good actions, which would never have been any benefit to you unless you had thus repented. From slaves of Satan you will become adopted sons of God, co-heirs with Jesus Christ.

But remember well, my beloved children, that you must have a good will. St. Augustine says that God cures all evils, but only those which we really want to be cured.

The unhappy leper really wished to be healed, for he realized the sad condition he was in, and Jesus immediately extended His hand and touched him. We admire the power of Christ, for at once the whole body was healed. It was again full of vigor and health. Jesus did not give him time to burst out in sentiments of wonder, exultation or gratitude, but said: "See thou tell no man, but go, show thyself to the priest." The man obeyed, and as he went he could not help letting people know what Jesus had done for him. The fame of this miracle spread about the country and drew many to look for help from Our Lord.

There was in Capharnaum a centurion, a soldier and a heathen, whose servant lay at the point of death. He came to Our Lord and laid his trouble before Him: "My servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented." "I will come and heal him," said Our Lord. But the centurion did not expect so great a favor; he repeated those admirable words: "Lord I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word and my servant shall be healed."

These words are so applicable to all poor sinners who are about to receive the visit of the Lord, that the Church has borrowed them and uses them three times when communion is to be given. We should repeat them with a heart full of confusion, because even though we possessed the purity of

an angel and the sanctity of John the Baptist, we would not be worthy to receive in our heart Our Lord Jesus. Therefore ought we do all in our power to be free from sin, that we might be the less unworthy to receive Jesus in the great Sacrament of His love.

There are few young people who are so impressed with the sublimity of this holy Sacrament that they approach it with sentiments of respect and veneration. On the contrary they generally go without proper dispositions. They do not endeavor to excite in themselves the sentiments of devotion and love of God which are required to make a good communion.

But there are many, too, who are unworthy to receive Jesus in their heart because their souls are blackened with crime. They defile their tongues with impure conversations, and they dare to receive on them the body of Christ. They defile their bodies with impurities and into these they dare to introduce the Holy of holies. They give scandal and they wish to receive Jesus.

They go to confession and if the priest refuse them absolution because he sees no signs of amendment, they go to another, who is easier, so that they may get through. How blind such young people are! They do not comprehend that they are making a bad communion.

Go, of course, frequently to communion, but do so with a pure heart, and free from sin, full of humility, reverence, and love. When the time approaches for communion, call on the angels, the archangels and all the holy spirits, and beg of them to accompany you to the banquet of Our Lord.

When Our Lord heard the humble words of the centurion He was struck with astonishment and said, "Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great a faith in Israel." It was certainly a great act of faith, and that was the reason it drew on the centurion that commendation which the Lord seldom gave. The centurion trusted in the power and goodness of Our Lord. He knew, too, that it was not necessary for Our

Lord to come to his house. He knew He was God, or at least had the power of God at His command. For this faith and trust Our Lord broke forth into unusual praise.

Even among faithful Christians it is rare to find those who really trust in God. They put trust in their friends, in their own smartness and strength, but they do not remember that they have a God at their command to whom they may go with all confidence. We trust too much to our friends in many things and even prefer them to God. Here is a young man who, meeting his companions, goes with them to lunch. It is Friday. The young man refuses to eat meat, but his companions persuade him. "Oh, eat it! What wrong can there be?" He yields, and the sin is committed.

Another meets a companion on the street. "Where are you going?" "To hear a sermon," is the reply. "Oh, don't be so foolish as to sit there to listen to such an insignificant preacher. That is good enough for doting old people or pious women. Come, let us go to the theatre. You will see nice things; you will laugh and be happier there than in church." He goes out of friendship for his companion. He witnesses the derision of his religion, or immoral scenes; he sees many things that please the eye and stir his sensuality. He hears many improper things; his mind is filled with loose sayings and bad thoughts, and all this has happened simply to please a friend. You see then how obsequious you are to your friends, but of God and Christ you make no account.

When Our Lord had said the words of commendation to the centurion He added: "Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness." God is merciful to all; He calls all; but they must have the faith of the centurion. Then He turned again to the centurion and said, "Go, and as thou hast believed so be it done to thee." That same moment the servant was healed, and when the centurion arrived home he found the man perfectly re-

stored to health. Just reflect a moment on these words of Our Lord. "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Terrible words; but which will prove as true to many Christians as they were to many of the Jews. Not a day passes but many infidels and idolaters come to the faith, are converted, and enter the kingdom of God, while many Christians born in the faith, brought up and educated in it, perish miserably in eternal damnation. A damned soul once returned to the earth and asked whether there were any good people still on earth, for he had seen such innumerable multitudes going to hell that he thought there could not be one left. St. Bernard understood so well the misery of those who went to hell that he used to say, "If out of all the human race, who number thousands of millions of souls, it were known that only one was to go to hell, I would tremble with fear lest I should be that miserable one." O, my dear young people, let us make up our minds that we will not be of the number of the wicked Christians who will lose their places in heaven which were marked out for them from all eternity had they remained faithful. Are we, the sons of the kingdom, we, the adopted sons of God, to be excluded from our future heritage in heaven and thrown out into darkness? Oh, since the Lord has been so good to us that we have received the grace of being born in a Christian family, let us beg also the grace to remain faithful to Christ and love Him so dearly that we may enter the heavenly kingdom which is ours by right. At the same time knowing that many places are left vacant in heaven by bad Christians, let us beg Our Lord to send His light to the east and west and bring many to occupy these seats of glory.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* viii. 23-27. *At that time* when Jesus entered into the boat, his disciples followed him; and behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves; but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awaked him, saying: Lord, save us, we perish. And Jesus saith to them, Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up he commanded the winds, and the sea; and there came a great calm. But the men wondered, saying, What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him?

JESUS IN A STORM ON THE LAKE.

IT was in the evening after a day of very hard work, during which Our Lord had performed miracles, and preached the new Gospel to the multitudes which continually followed Him, that He took His disciples with Him in a small ship over to the other side of the lake. Had any one, impressed with faith in Our Lord's divinity, seen this company getting into that boat, they would certainly say that it would have a prosperous journey, the wind would blow most favorably, the waves would be quiet, the waters would feel the happiness of the nearness of their Creator. We would think ourselves happy to be with Jesus on that ship. But Our Lord intended a different voyage: scarcely had the boat left the shore, than the wind began to increase and a great squall arose. The boat was very small, and every moment the angry waters threatened to engulf it. We read of many saints who have been able to govern the waters, and make them help them in their designs for the glory of God. St. Francis spread his mantle over the waves, and he and his companions got on it, and in this way travelled from Africa to Rome, wafted by gentle breezes and carried by quiet waters and tides. But when Jesus was on the water, could He do nothing? Was it true that His disciples were to do greater things than He ever did? Perhaps it was Judas that brought

this severe storm on the frail vessel. Some Fathers of the Church say that this tempest was a figure of the battles which the Church has to undergo in this world. From its very establishment, the Church had to suffer many persecutions; powerful kings and tyrants rose against it, they sought to destroy it by every means that human ingenuity or cruelty could invent. They would have succeeded had not God kept the promise which He made, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church. In fact, the contrary happened; while the enemies of the Church thought they had destroyed it, they spread it all over the world. The greater the persecution the greater became the number of the faithful.

Even at this very day there are men who make war on the bark of Peter, in order to sink it and to remove from the world our holy religion. But it will be found that their efforts are useless. We can confidently repeat, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church." Many others, too, there are, who though they do not persecute the Church, still lead such wicked lives that they render her no honor. But you, my dear young people, will be good and obedient children of the Church, that in all her persecutions she may be consoled by witnessing the sanctity of your lives. We are sailing over a tempestuous sea, where there are many storms to be encountered. Happy those who do not suffer shipwreck. To avoid this terrible shipwreck and to arrive safely in the port of heaven we must labor diligently, we must be vigilant and on our guard. When a ship goes out from port, laden with rich merchandise, with precious treasures, how careful the captain is, how obedient and prompt are the sailors in guiding the vessel, so that it may not run on a sand-bar or be dashed to pieces on a rock. Should a storm come up, how vigilant are all the officers; what labors do they not undergo, they do not spare themselves in any manner until the danger is over. With the same vigilance you must guide the little ship, your soul; watch day and night, watch when you think there is a calm, and you are

in security, when the devil does not tempt you; for when you least expect it, he will raise a most furious storm of temptations in your soul. Watch when you think yourself strong; watch with unceasing care as Our Lord said to the Apostles: "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation." St. Anthony said to his disciples, "I counsel you, my sons, to have vigilance over your hearts, for we have many enemies who can destroy them." When the devil sees Christians attentive to their spiritual life, he attacks them with temptations and spreads over them his net of bad thoughts to make them fall into sin. Prayer, vigils, fasts, the sign of the cross, faith, trust in God, humility, and a great love of Jesus Christ will put him to flight.

But to return to the ship. If a vessel strikes a rock, all is generally lost, while if the soul falls into sin, she can quickly rise again. By the grace of God, a plank, which is the Sacrament of Penance, is thrown out to her, by which she can still reach the haven of heaven. But how few there are who look for this plank; how many have indeed found it, but use it badly, by making bad confessions! It is most absurd to be careless of shipwreck because we may find the means of being saved. Would any one say to the captain of a ship, "Do not be so careful; the wreck will produce many pieces of wood by which we can save ourselves." What would become of the valuable freight which the ship bears?

Your soul is a rich treasure when alive in the grace of God; if a single mortal sin should creep into that soul, it would die to God, and those great, magnificent Christian virtues you practised with so much attention would be lost; they would no longer give us the right to a reward in paradise. Oh, how often this happens! Let us look at that good youth, who by means of a pious education received from his parents, by his good will and vigilance over himself, keeps his baptismal innocence; goes to his first communion, and loves Our Lord his Saviour. What treasures of grace he accumulates! Afterwards, unhappily, grown tired of watchful-

ness, he falls into a great sin. What a dreadful wreck, which should be deplored with the bitterest tears. In one instant he has robbed himself of all the treasures he had gathered; he is dead before God. Behold how sin robs us of our most precious treasures! Oh, that he had made some more determined effort of resistance! Oh, had he but invoked the names of Jesus and Mary sincerely, he would not have fallen into sin. What a dreadful monster from hell is sin; it is worse than the lightning stroke that melts all the gold in the money chest, for sin so destroys and devours all our good works that they cannot be accounted to our credit for eternal life. It is true that as soon as we repent, our good works revive again by God's infinite kindness; still, many who fall into sin obstinately remain in it, and vain is their former goodness.

Let me impress upon your minds, my young people, the disastrous results of overconfidence in being saved. A youth who had lived a bad life had a strong inspiration to give up his evil ways. He wrote down his sins, so as to make a general confession more easily and fully, and was on his way to church, when the thought came into his mind: I will commit that sin once more; it will not matter much, a few times more or less, and it is just as easy to confess; this will certainly be the last time. He gave way to the temptation, committed the sin again, and, in coming from the house, was killed by an enemy.

Be ye, my dear young people, always on your guard; you are still innocent; make every effort to remain so, that the little vessel of your soul may arrive safely in port. A ship well furnished, and provided with all necessaries, guided by an expert pilot, will be able to cope with the fiercest tempest and will surely enter the harbor in triumph.

My dear young people, you are young and inexperienced as yet; put yourselves under the management of a skilful pilot, who knows the dangers of life and how to avoid them. The confessor is your pilot; let him give you full instruc-

tions in your conduct, and then have recourse to God in prayer; imitate the example of the Apostles, who, when the danger was greatest, went with confidence to Our Lord and said, "O Lord, have you no care for us; why do you abandon us?" Our Lord will rouse Himself from sleep at your cries, and will say half encouragingly, half complainingly, "Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Is this your confidence in Me? Has My grace done so very little for you?" Then He will command the sea of disturbance to be calm, and you will be astonished at the power and the love of Our Lord; you will say with the Apostles, "Who is this, thinkest thou, that both wind and sea obey Him?"

Yes, my young friends, have a most lively faith in Jesus, and when any temptation allures you, or when in danger, cry out with the Apostles, "Master, doth it not concern Thee that we perish?" When you had the misfortune to fall into sin, was it not because you neglected to call on Our Lord for help? on the contrary, did you not come out of temptation unscathed when you flew to the Almighty for protection? Then always have recourse to God; remember that He loves you more than you can ever realize, and be sure He will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. If He should give the devil permission to try you by temptation, you may be certain He has set a limit, beyond which he cannot go; the chained dog may make a great noise but he can do no harm.

Do you really believe that anything would have happened to the bark tossed on the lake? Not at all. It is the same with ourselves. Do not imagine that any misfortune will happen to you if you trustingly confide in God. St. Anthony, after having put to flight a great number of devils, sending forth a profound sigh to Our Lord said, "Where, O dear Jesus, were you? Why did you not come sooner to help me?" Our Lord answered, "Anthony, I was with you all the time, and saw your struggles; you were tempted that you might be strengthened in virtue; you have

fought well, and hereafter, you need not fear your enemies."

In this way will God act toward you, if in your temptations you have recourse to Him.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* xiii. 24-30. *At that time: Jesus spoke this parable to the multitude,* saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle. Then the servants of the good man of the house coming said to him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it cockle? And he said to them: An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? And he said: No: lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it in bundles to burn; but the wheat gather ye into my barn.

THE GOOD SEED AND THE BAD SOWN INTO IT.

THE kingdom of God is like to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But in the night when all slept, the enemy came and over it sowed cockle and spoiled all the work. We can easily see what will happen, when, over the good seed, bad is sown. The whole future crop will be ruined to a certainty.

This good husbandman, who cultivated his land so carefully, is God, our most loving Saviour, who came to redeem us and give His life for us. The field in which the good seed falls is the world; but you can take it to be your heart also, and the enemy who sows cockle is the devil. What happened to the field also happens to us. God is the good husbandman of our souls. What good seed does He not sow in us? Holy inspirations, holy thoughts, thoughts to do what is right, to make progress in fervor and devotion, and in His holy love.

He also sows good seed in our hearts when He comes to dwell there in holy communion. He produces there every virtue and takes away every vice.

But rare indeed are the youths who joyfully receive the good seed which Our Lord plants. On the contrary, many desire the bad. They even invite the devil to come, and give him perfect liberty to do as he pleases. The result is bad thoughts, most perverse desires, a disgust for all that is good, bad actions, a life of wickedness, so that if you could take a look into their hearts you would see an otherwise pleasant field filled with brambles and thorns and covered with poisonous plants. When does this sower of bad seed come to do this mischief? He does it at night, when people are not watchful; when they are idle and inclined to sleep; not caring to strengthen themselves with prayer and the use of the sacraments; when with all their might they do not fly the occasions of sin; in short when they fall asleep in the practice of virtue. It is then that the enemy secretly enters. Ah, my dear young people, watch most carefully that the devil may find no entrance to do this evil to your innocent hearts. He has a trick of making his bad work look insignificant, but soon the seed will take such deep root that it will be almost impossible to eradicate the evil. The devil needs very little to gain possession of your souls. A little concession on your part is all he wants. In fact the devil needed nothing more from David than a look from afar. Could he ask less from so saintly a man, the favorite of almighty God? St. Francis of Assisi once said to his companions, "Do not let the devil have a hold of a single hair of your head, for no sooner has he that in hand than he will drag you to anything." Great is the care we must exercise, then, in avoiding the snares laid for us. But, St. Bernard says, the devil can harm only those who wish to be harmed.

After the field had received this double sowing, every day it showed more plainly that there had been bad work done. The servants saw this, and full of affliction they hastened to

the master and said, "Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it cockle?" The lord answered, "It is certainly not my sowing; an enemy has done this." "What are we to do now? Would it not be well if we pulled the bad weeds out so as to clear the field of it?" "Do not do that," said the master, "for the good seed would suffer by it. Let both grow together, and let both ripen. Then I will give my orders to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn."

This cockle is a figure of the wicked Christians, sons of the devil, who live with the good. How much of this bad seed and bad crops are to be found in the field of the Church? Bad Christians have chosen the devil as their master, and they seek to do his will. They even go further, and are worse than the devil himself. They become adepts in vice: by their bad words, their wicked deeds, and bad example (which the devil has not power to show), they sow evil on all sides. How many innocent youths do they precipitate into sin! Some of you, my dear young people, even at this early period of your life, have cause to shed bitter tears for having trampled under foot your purity. The devil could not cause so much evil unless he were well seconded by so many of his sons; by so many scandalous companions; these are they who fill the whole world with their crimes.

But we see here the great mercy of God. All creatures, the ministers of God's justice, clamor for extermination of these sinners. The water cries out, "I will drown these wicked sinners!" The fire leaps up to reduce them to ashes. The earth would open a great chasm to suck in these wretches. The whole world groans under this load of sin, and would be happy to shake off this burden of iniquity. But God in His infinite patience restrains the elements so that they do no harm, for He allows the sun to shine on the good and on the bad, and the beneficent rain to fall on all. St. Augustine laments most beautifully his own condition. "I

sinned and you appeared not to notice it. I did not refrain from crime but you refrained from punishment. I continued a long time to commit sin but you continued your love toward me."

But will God always act in this manner toward those who will not be converted? The day of vengeance will come. God, sitting on a throne from which proceeds thunder and lightning, will come in His great majesty and will command His angels to separate the cockle from the wheat. He will make bundles of the wicked youths who are present in the Church only to make fun of religion, of the Blessed Virgin, and the saints; bundles of so many insolent youths, disobedient men, who seem to live only to give trouble to their superiors; bundles of the evil-tongued ones that destroy the innocence of others; bundles of so many scandalous youths, who are a disgrace to Christianity; bundles of those irreligious, unbelieving miscreants, who destroy the precious deposit of faith in others. All these will be put into bundles to burn for all eternity. The only good that comes from their lives is that they show forth the terrible judgment of God and of His justice. The great evil of the world is that while its young people hear the menaces of God they care very little for the threats and still continue in their wicked ways.

Father Segneri gives us an example which will illustrate all that I have said. The Emperor Valens is conceded by all to have been a most wicked man. He persecuted the Catholic Church and showed great favor to the Arians, who had done so much injury to religion. God almighty was at length moved by the groans of the suffering Church and raised the whole West against the East and Valens took the field. A holy hermit, who had his home in a cave in the mountain, came down and went to visit the emperor. "Emperor," said he, "open the churches you have closed and you will return victorious—if not you shall die on the field of battle." Valens heard him, but said he was crazy, and continued his march. The hermit had a mission from God and

was not discouraged. Again he met the emperor and repeated the same words. The impious Valens was struck with them, but thought it weakness on the one side to yield, and still on the other it seemed to him temerity not to heed the warning. He convoked a council that day, but as they were Arians they emboldened him and even had the hermit punished.

But a third time the monk made his appearance and taking hold of the reins of the emperor's horse, he said: "I have come back to warn you for the last time. Open the churches and you will conquer your enemies—otherwise you will die on the field." Angry at this interruption the emperor had the man thrown down a precipice where they expected him to find his death. No sooner had the army passed than three angels dressed in white drew him from the precipice not only uninjured but without a scratch on his body. Then taking a short path he once more presented himself to the emperor. The emperor had him seized and thrown into prison until the return of the army from battle, when the hermit was to be chastised well. "You will never return," said the hermit. "You will go into battle and will be beaten. You will have to flee and at last you will fall into the hands of your enemies who will burn you at the stake."

All that the holy monk had predicted came to pass. The emperor went to battle and suffered a severe repulse and his army was put to flight. The emperor himself sought refuge in a haystack, and when the enemy came they set fire to it and he was burned alive. This emperor was indeed a blind and hardened wretch, who had many warnings from the man of God. But many sinners are much worse, for they hear repeated warnings, and all to no purpose. How many warnings the confessor gives to his youthful penitent. "If you continue such a life," he will say, "so dissipated, devotionless, without prayer, you will fall into mortal sin. If you do not cease that immodest talk that you delight in, you will fall into the most horrible forms of that sin. If you do not guard

your eyes you will fill your heart with many different distractions which will draw you from God, and you will gradually sink into the death of sin."

These warnings are heard but not heeded; prayer is neglected, bad talk is continued and bad companionship is looked for. Be not hardened, but heed these threats. God makes them to warn you. If up to the present you have been with the very bad crop, you can change your whole life; you can become wheat; your nature can be changed to such a degree that the cockle will produce good wheat.

What and where is that heavenly barn into which the Master is about to gather all His wheat? It is paradise, where the good shall have joy for all eternity. They will be in that barn secure from all injury. It is the good wheat and the precious fruit that are well kept for future use. The fruit is now harvested and protected from the cold rains. No longer the hot, oppressive sun burns it; no more do the storms worry it; it is safely hidden away in paradise. This will also be a great joy to the elect, who no longer need stand in the midst of the wicked band so hateful to God and so oppressive to the good.

There are no more tares since there is no more bad seed; all is pure wheat. All in heaven adore God, together all love Him, all bless Him; there are none that will not do glory to God. Would it not be dreadful if one of you were excluded from that beautiful eternal home for one sin?

A rich man lost in one evening at play his beautiful home and was put out of it, a beggar. He never could pass it afterward but tears gushed from his eyes as he thought to himself: "What a fool I have been! In one night, for the pleasure of a game, I risked and lost my beautiful home. All my life I must be a houseless vagrant, for I am too old to amass enough to purchase another home."

What will the thoughts of the damned be when they see the places in paradise which would have been theirs had they only made a little effort? But, for a momentary pleasure, they sacrificed all.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* xiii. 31-35. *At that time: Jesus spoke to the multitudes this parable:* The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: Which is the least indeed of all seeds: but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof. Another parable he spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes: and without parables he did not speak to them. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.

THE MUSTARD SEED—THE LEAVEN.

OUR Lord referred to His kingdom in different ways, as you have already noticed. On one occasion He likened it to the wise virgins, who, with their lamps, went to meet the spouse. He compared it, also, to a rich merchant who knew of a precious stone in a certain field, and sacrificed all he had to buy that field. The marriage feast made for His divine Son is also a figure of the Church; so also the net, filled with fishes, which was drawn to the land. Among all these similitudes—which are notably beautiful, and admired by literary men—the mustard seed, the one of to-day's Gospel, is the most beautiful.

A man takes this little seed, and plants it in a suitable place in his garden, and from that minute seed there is raised a plant, so strong, luxuriant, and hardy, that it gives shelter and food to many birds, who build their nests thereon.

The Gospel is explained in different ways; but the most natural explanation is, that the mustard seed is the primitive Church. But I shall take it for my text, to make you seriously think on an important truth, which I find hidden in this parable, and it is this: We must not think that we have to

do great and extraordinary things to gain heaven; no, we need only perform our ordinary actions well. Our little works are very important. It is these that will bring us to the kingdom of God. Many think it is very hard to get to heaven, because we are not called to do great works. Our position is the same as that held by millions in this world, who have nothing striking or great to perform. Should we, on this account, fall into the error of thinking that therefore we will not get to heaven? And, not having great things to do we even do not perform our daily actions as we ought. I am pretty certain, my good young people, that when you read in the lives of the saints of their liberality, in giving all to the poor; of their prompt obedience to God's call, in leaving the world at once; when you read of the fortitude with which they disciplined and mortified their bodies; how they hardly took any sleep; prayed from morning till night and through the night until morning, that you become discouraged, and say to yourselves, "It is very hard to go to heaven."

Having begun your journey of life well, under the guidance of teachers and parents, you think you ought to do something extraordinary, and become discouraged because you find no opportunity and do nothing—like the foolish boys who read novels about Indian warfare. They prepare to go to fight the redmen, take pistols and powder and set out, to be caught by a policeman and ignominiously brought back to be delivered over to the custody of sorrowful parents.

It is a great mistake to think you must do extraordinary things if you want to get to heaven. The devil is the author of this deceit, by means of which he gains control of many souls who believe it is too hard to be saved. They lose courage, and conclude that the best thing to do is to enjoy a good time instead of thinking how to become saints.

God wants us all to be saints, but not in the same way. Some He calls to live in the desert and there He wants them

to lead saintly lives. But young men in general are called to live in the world and there they have to become saints. But you will say, "Yes, precisely. That is the difficulty—to be saints in the midst of the world, where there are so many distractions, so many occasions of sin." Yes, I will grant that there is really great difficulty in getting through life with your baptismal innocence. The old man that goes to his grave will tell you how hard it is. But let us not make the difficulty any greater than it is, and whether it be small or great we have to make the best of it.

"But," you will say, "I shall have to do a great deal of good; long prayers, discipline and penance will be necessary, for the saints did these things, and I hate and fear them." But let me tell you that not even this is necessary. You surely have not forgotten the Gospel which has been read to you just now, of the grain of mustard seed. This, then, is what you ought to do. As soon as you rise from your bed in the morning, raise your eyes to heaven, and say to Our Lord: "I would like to make a long prayer, but I must now go to my work to earn my bread, and to do my duty. Lord, all that I am about to do shall be for Thy honor and glory." Then, during the day, think often of God and send up a prayer to the throne of His grace as an act of filial love. In the evening before you retire, again say to Our Lord: "O, my God, I thank Thee for the many graces given me on this day. I am now going to take my rest, that my strength may be regained and I may be able to continue to do something for Thy glory." Then offer all your sufferings, poverty, cold, hunger, dishonor, disappointments to God and say to Him, "All this has been for Thy love!" Then resolve to remain firm in the good resolutions you have taken, and these little actions offered with a good intention are made great and glorious works before God. As St. John Chrysostom says, "These actions cost no expense nor labor nor sweat; good will is all that is required for a good action. Our Lord looks more to the heart than to the work. If you do your

work with a good heart it will have the greatest merit. Our Lord praised the poor widow who gave her mite to the Temple, because the intention made it a noble sacrifice before God. Do not the little insignificant actions of a child please us though there is not much in them? So it is with ourselves before God. The rich men who threw into the corbona great sums of money were not commended at all, but this poor woman is extolled by Our Lord Himself. A glass of cold water is certainly a small matter and costs nothing; and yet almighty God has promised to reward it when given in His name.

These are small things that we all can do, but they are the acts that will gain for us heaven as a reward.

We have to lament, however, that though it is so easy to offer our ordinary actions to God, there are thousands who act only from a mere human motive, and thus lose all the reward. Do not forget, then, that little things bring us to heaven—not the great actions.

Here is a little example from Father Segneri. It is related that the Emperor Theodosius went to Treves, in order to view there the old Roman games. Two members of his court who did not care for these sights, stayed away, taking a walk through the country in order to feast their eyes on nature. As they were passing along they found deep in the woods a solitary home, where some hermits lived. They entered, and, as they were speculating concerning the smallness of the house and the absence of furniture, they saw a book of pretty good size on the table. One of the men opened it and found it to be the life of St. Anthony. He began to read it out of curiosity at first, but he became so interested in it, that after a while he could hardly stop reading, and at the same time a great desire to imitate these examples took possession of him. After deep meditation he said to his companion with shame depicted on his face: "What road are we poor fellows travelling, with our great pretensions, our courtly manners, and servitude to the king? Where are we going to end?

What more can we ever expect than the favor of the prince? And, supposing we get that—what will come of it? Life is short, and youth a very slippery time. There are many who are our competitors and if they exert themselves, they may get ahead of us; what will we have in the end? We will have had much affliction but very little consolation and peace. To become God's friend all that is required is to wish it."

The man again read on; then he closed the book resolutely, and standing there with his hands on it he said to his companion: "As for me I am now resolved not to go from here again. In this house and in this place I wish to consecrate myself to God. If you do not choose to imitate my example do not disturb me."

"What!" said the other, "do you think it pleases God that I should have the earth, and you take heaven for your portion?" They put their resolution into practice on the spot and took the lowly garb of hermits, laying aside their rich court dresses; locking themselves in a hermit's cell they remained faithful to their vows to the end of their lives.

Where did the holiness of these courtiers begin? From the time they refused to go to the theatre. Had they gone there they would not have seen that book nor made the serious reflections which led them afterwards to embrace a holy life. If on so little depends a good life or a bad one, ought you not to fear the small beginnings of sin and seek the small beginnings of doing good, that Our Lord may prosper you?

May not your irreverence and your talking in church be the beginning of a bad life? May not your aversion to hearing the word of God, or going to confession from mere habit, without any sorrow for your sins, be the first impulse to a bad life? Those communions made so coldly, with so little preparation, with no thanksgiving after them, lead into the way of death.

Again, when you despise the inspirations of God, when you neglect putting into practice the holy advice received

from your confessor, or your spiritual superiors, where will this lead? These are all venial sins, and taken singly do not matter much, but taken on the whole do they not show an inclination to evil? The little value you set on your faith and a good life show you are beginning to drift away, slowly, imperceptibly at first, but when you have been caught by the stream, you will be swept along the path of death with fearful rapidity. A spark is very small, but it may kindle a terrible fire. In the same manner, from these little things come often great spiritual ruin. A glance of the eye, listening to a bad conversation, improper reading, a wilful thought not repressed, can be the beginning of a downward course, and it is very hard to stop, and next to impossible to retrace the steps.

In the infirmities of the soul we find the same symptoms as in sickness of the body. Here is a youth in the flower of his life, strong, healthy, fresh and rosy. One day he feels a pain in his head. He suffers loss of appetite, and a slight fever declares itself. He goes to bed and his condition becomes worse; for some reason doctors cannot help him, and in a few days his funeral winds its way to the graveyard. How could such a young and healthy man die so soon!

Now how is it in the spiritual life? That youth was healthy and strong when he made his first communion. He was full of good resolutions; he avoided sin more carefully than he would death; he, in short, served God with fervor. But he felt a coldness in the practice of his religion. It was but a very slight coldness: he was careless at his prayers; he omitted his frequent communions. At first he was scrupulous about entertaining evil thoughts, and in choosing his companions, and when he heard them speak evil words he rebuked them and avoided them afterwards. But by degrees he relished wicked conversation and was ashamed to appear too pious. That youth, once so good, had lost his delicacy of conscience, and went on until he lost all shame and came to the last stages of spiritual life; he lost the grace of God

altogether by one great sin, and now he is spiritually dead, in the hands of the devil, and no longer able to rise, like a beast that has fallen under its load. Does not this prove that we must carefully avoid our small faults? Tertullian tells us that little faults are the beginnings of great crimes.

There are some who laugh at such an argument, but let us not look lightly on such matters. Be convinced of the truth of these assertions, though they seem a little far-fetched. You will be able to trace the consequences of evil to small beginnings when you stand at the judgment-seat of God. When the heavy veil of ignorance and passion shall fall from your eyes, then you will admit the truth. The just man will see how close to the edge of the precipice he was sometimes walking, without knowing it. That Mass at which you assisted with devotion; that deed which seemed to have so little good in it; that communion made in honor of the Blessed Virgin, was the beginning of your salvation. Had you gone perhaps just once more with a certain companion; in such a temptation had you failed to call on Jesus and Mary, what would have become of you? You mortified your eyes; now you see the glory of God. You shed a few tears, and now you enjoy the forgiveness of your sins and eternal happiness.

How will the damned, on the contrary, burst into blasphemy and rage when they see how little would have saved them! They will say, "Oh, that I had listened to that sermon from which I deliberately ran away! If I had not liked a certain company; if I had gone to confession with a little more compunction; if, on a particular day, I had not fallen into that sin, I would be saved and would be now in paradise. If with a little fervor I had said, 'Lord, give me Thy kingdom,' I would now be in heaven instead of in hell."

One word on the other parable which Our Lord proposed. The kingdom of God is also like to a little leaven, which a woman took and mixed with the dough, so that you could no longer distinguish it, but the whole was influenced by it

and was leavened. Some doctors say that by this leaven is meant the virtue of charity, and the grace of Jesus Christ, infused into our hearts by the Holy Ghost. By these God reigns in our soul. That woman is the holy Christian soul, who hides the word of God in the heart to keep it there, where it does its work by spreading its influence over a whole life. It restrains our evil character and corrects it. Then put this holy leaven of the word of God into your soul, take care of it and let it work, and you will be happy for all eternity.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* xx. 1-16. *At this time: Jesus said to his disciples this parable:* The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder, who went early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And having agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the market-place idle, and he said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just. And they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour: and did in like manner. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he saith to them: Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them: Go you also into my vineyard. And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward: Call the laborers and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. When therefore they were come, that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more: and they also received every man a penny. And receiving it, they murmured against the master of the house, saying: These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, that have borne the burden of the day and the heats. But he answering said to one of them: Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine, and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? is thy eye evil because I am good? So shall the last be first, and the first, last; for many are called, but few chosen.

THE LABORERS IN GOD'S VINEYARD CALLED AT DIFFERENT TIMES OF THE DAY.

THE kingdom of heaven is like to the father of a family, who goes out very early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. He comes to the square in the city where workmen gather, waiting for some one to engage them. He finds them there and hires them to work in his vineyard, agreeing to give them a penny a day. Three hours afterward he goes there again, and finds some more who wish to work; these also he sends to work and promises them what is just. Again, three hours afterward, he does the same, and also at the ninth hour, which is in the afternoon when the heat of the day is over and the day is far spent, when they could not expect to be hired except for small jobs; still this father of a family whose work was very pressing hires them also. Not yet satisfied, just before the last hour, he goes to the market-place, and still there are some standing waiting, thinking perhaps that they may obtain work for the day following. But so great was the hurry of the father of the family, that these also he sends to his vineyard to work for that one short hour.

Who is that father of a family, my dear young people? He is our good God. It is the Lord of heaven and earth who wants us all, without exception, to go to work in His vineyard, which is the Church. As is stated, He is continually calling and sending laborers to His vineyard. But your own little soul is also meant in speaking of the vineyard. From your earliest childhood God has called you to work there. Have you worked hard and faithfully that a good harvest might be obtained? Perhaps you have not given it a thought, and have been idle all the day. All your thoughts and endeavors were directed to enjoying yourself in this world; you passed your time in play and idleness. The word of God was loathsome to you; not only did you not think of doing right, but you even looked forward to do evil; you

labored to ruin your soul, you grew fatigued in the ways of wickedness, you would not listen to the loving invitation of God: "Go you also into My vineyard." Great will be the punishment of such young people.

But you, my willing young people, will listen to the invitation, and at once proceed to the cultivation of your hearts. Listen to the instruction of your parents, look for the society of good companions, attend to the prayers and exhortations of your teachers and your confessors. Continually, hour after hour, Our Lord knocks at the door of your hearts; He wants to enter and remain there, He is anxious to obtain full possession of your soul. He is not looking for a share in your heart, but for the whole of it; the heart is after all, small; the more you give it to the world the less will remain for God.

St. Teresa had affection for a certain relative; she noticed her attachment was becoming stronger, and she gave it up. Then Our Lord said to her, "Now you are altogether Mine and I am all yours." But some of you may say that according to the Gospel it does not seem necessary to go to work at the first call—there is time enough, the invitation will certainly be repeated several times in the future and all will heed it. God is so good, He will gladly receive us into His vineyard at any time of our life. Had the workmen who stood there awaiting a call said, "Well, we will not go now, but will wait till later in the day," what would the father of the family have said? Would he have waited for them? It is not likely; even though God is merciful and of infinite goodness, will He continue to waste His invitation on unwilling creatures? Is not this good God worthy to be served by you from your childhood? Are you going to give Him only the last days of your life, He who is worthy of all love? We would certainly fall into despair if we came to the end of our lives and found we had done nothing for the glory of God.

There lived a certain man who spent the most of his life in enjoyments. He used to say, "How beautiful the world

is! I have all I want, money in plenty, servants at my command, good food, magnificent estates, and agreeable companions. Let me have a carnival the whole year round." In this way he continued to live the most of his life, but in old age he began to think that there was another world, where he knew he would be unhappy for all eternity. He became a Religious, and consecrated himself entirely to God. In the beginning the poor man was so ashamed of himself before God, that he had enjoyed the wicked world and now was willing to cheat the devil, that it seemed almost dishonest of him to participate in so much glory in heaven, when he had deserved nothing but condemnation in hell. He seemed to hear a voice within him saying, "You are a nice fellow; you got all the pleasure that was possible out of the world, and when it has lost its charms you give the leavings to God. What do you think God can do with such refuse?" It was enough to drive him to despair, for what answer could he make? The case was plainly against him. You, my dear young people, began long ago to serve God, all your days have been spent in His service; if sometimes you have fallen you have begun again. St. Thomas says that "They who have served God from childhood will certainly be saved."

When evening came the father of the family gave orders that each one should receive what he had earned, the last as well as the first. And what reward did the last get? They received as much as those who had worked since earlies. morning. But why were all paid equally? Because the last were full of fervor and zeal, and had the good intention of laboring faithfully. God, you see, not only pays for our work but also for our intention. Have the intention to do great things for God, and even though you do not perform them they will be placed to your credit. In the morning say your prayers and at the same time wish that you could pray always; hear Mass with the feeling that you would like to hear all the Masses that are celebrated all over the world; go to communion occasionally, wishing that you could receive Jesus

every day. Study to bring back wayward youths by your words and good example, praying that almighty God may extend the favor of His graces to all that have gone astray. Suffer patiently for God's sake the little injuries that one meets with in every-day life, with the resolution of enduring any injuries, fatigues, or labors that God may be pleased to send you. Would you not become very rich in merit if you lived in this manner? God, on the Last Day, will call His faithful servants to sit on His own throne and will fill them with great joy. If you think of this, how careful you will be to remain faithful to God and endeavor to merit more. The trouble with all of us in this world is, that we forget that heaven is to be the reward of our good actions. My young people, raise your eyes to heaven. Do much good, lead holy lives, and make all efforts to gain the pleasure of paradise.

In the time of St. Augustine there lived in Rome a lady named Melania. One day she began to think seriously of her salvation; moved by this thought, she gave up all the gayeties of the world, and began to mortify herself so much that in a short time she became greatly emaciated; her uncle, a man without much conscience, had not been at home when she was converted, and when he saw her face colorless and reduced in flesh, he cried out, "Is this the handsome lady Melania?" She gave him this beautiful answer: "The love of heaven has done this." The words were spoken with such fervor and conviction that he was converted, though the eloquent sermons of St. Augustine had never made any impression on him. My dear young people, no longer hesitate to make the good resolution to gain heaven at any cost; omit nothing that will conduce to that end; do not believe yourself secure until you are in heaven, for Our Lord concludes His Gospel by saying: "Many are called but few are chosen." Be not terrified or disheartened by these words, for those only will lose heaven who neglect the things that would bring them there. Pray then a great deal, go to confession often, receive communion frequently, avoid mortal sin, hate even venial sins, and you will surely go to heaven.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Gospel. *Luke* viii. 4-15. *At that time:* When a very great multitude was gathered together and hastened out of the cities unto him, he spoke by a similitude: The sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside and was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock: and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it, choked it. And other some fell upon good ground: and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundred fold. Saying these things, he cried out: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him what this parable might be. To whom he said: To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And they by the wayside, are they that hear: then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved. Now they upon the rock, are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy: and these have no roots: for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation, they fall away. And that which fell among thorns, are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that on the good ground: are they who in a good and very good heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.

THE SEED OF THE WORD OF GOD THAT FALLS BY THE WAYSIDE, ON THE ROCKS, AMONG THORNS, OR UPON GOOD GROUND.

It is hardly necessary to explain this Gospel, for Our Lord Himself gave the explanation of it by His own mouth. Let me ask you what kind of hearts you possess, what good do you derive from the frequent hearing of the word of God? Let me ask you if the ground is hard and trodden down where the seed falls; is it at once carried away by the devil, or is it rocky soil where it cannot take root? You hear the word of God, but does it grow up within you? Do you become more pious, more attentive, and reverent in God's

house? You hear the word of God, but do you observe the feasts of the Church with more devotion; do you go more frequently to the sacraments? You hear the word of God, but do you avoid bad companions, who lead you into sin? You hear the word of God, but do you give good example to your companions; or are you not, by your bad deeds and your wicked words, a rock of scandal to those who come near you? Too often it happens that those who have all the advantages of good advice and example are still wicked themselves and make others so. This is a great source of sorrow to the priest who sows the seed of God with such assiduity, with much labor and solicitude. "Give an occasion to a wise man, and wisdom shall be added to him. Teach a just man, and he shall make haste to receive it." But it is not so with the bad, who wish to continue in their evil ways; you may preach to them in vain, you may pray for them with many groans and tears; all is useless. You may represent to them the enormity of their sins, the scandal they are giving, and the imminent danger of eternal perdition in which they live, but all is in vain. You will not be able to make them say their prayers morning and night, they will not go to confession, they will not even say a *Hail Mary* in the day. If you tell them they should pray in temptation, that they should call on Jesus and Mary, they only laugh at you. Heavenly wisdom will not enter a wicked soul, the hearts of such become harder and more obstinate, they are disgusted with the word of God. Is the number of these few, do you think? No, indeed. Go to church on Sundays and holydays; you will see that what I say is true. The streets, the public places, the saloons, are full of people, but few are found in the churches. This is the greatest punishment that God can send us, to let us go on in this disgust of His holy word. You should not belong to this class. You have religious training enough to know better. Do not imitate so many who never give themselves time to hear the word of God, though they have time enough to go to bad places and to immoral plays

where the soul is ruined. Never do the like; remember that those who do not like to hear the word of God, have already the mark of damnation on their foreheads. Listen then gladly, for it will be your salvation. St. Bernard says that there is no surer sign of eternal damnation than to despise the word of God. Yes, my good young people, put aside all fear of hell provided you keep in your hearts the love of the word of God.

Here is a beautiful example of the holy virgin Scholastica which is found in the breviary. This holy virgin consecrated herself to God from her earliest childhood. Nothing delighted her more than to hear of God, or to speak of Him to others. At one time, as was her custom every year, she went to visit her saintly brother Benedict, who came out of his monastery to meet her, for women were not allowed within the men's cloister. They had their supper together in the evening, after having passed the day in conversation about God. When Scholastica saw that the hour was getting late, she said to her brother: "You might do me the favor of staying with me overnight, that we may talk of the goodness of God, for it is now a late hour." He answered, "I cannot do this, my sister; it is not allowed for a monk to remain outside of his cell during the night." When Scholastica had heard this she was grieved, but she buried her face in her hands and began to pray. All at once a terrible storm broke out, with thunder and lightning, and the rain fell in torrents. St. Benedict knew that his sister had prayed for this. "What have you done, sister dear? You have prayed to keep me out of the monastery. May God forgive you." The holy virgin with a bright smile answered: "I asked you to stay, but you would not listen; I asked my God, and no sooner had I made the petition than He listened to me. The sky, as you saw, was clear, but no sooner did I pray than the storm broke out." St. Benedict was obliged to remain in the company of his sister, and spent the remainder of the night in prayer and pious reading. In the morning St. Benedict went

back to his monastery and Scholastica returned to her home. Three days after, the holy monk raising his eyes, saw the spirit of his sister carried to heaven by the angels with great joy and festive song.

You, O good youth, who like to talk of God, console yourselves for the pretended loss of much pleasure in the conversations of the world, for you are of the number of the elect. They who are of God hear the word of God.

Let me beg of you, since it is in your power, to be always the good soil which receives gladly the seed of the word of God and so yields a hundred-fold. Let us not grow tired in doing good. Many young people indeed begin well; they are good, obedient, and respectful to grown people; they have faith; they love the Church and the sacraments, but when they grow older somehow they lose their piety. We find them in bad company, idle, beginning to drink, hangers-on at pool-rooms and gambling-places, and they avoid going to church. They go from bad to worse until they are ready for any deed of wickedness.

O, indeed, young men, if you did well you would have joy in this life, you would have the peace of God about you, that peace which the world cannot give, that peace which surpasseth all understanding. What great consolation will you feel at the hour of death when you shall see reserved for your glory and collected for your benefit all the good you have done in this life! The wicked will go to their graves with great show and pomp, but they are indeed poor before the throne of God, who rejects them, and sends them into exterior darkness. But to the good youth He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord," and then He will show him his beautiful home where he is to reign with God for all eternity.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *Luke* xviii. 31-43. *At that time:* Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man; for he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said. Now it came to pass when he drew nigh to Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace. But he cried out much more: Son of David have mercy on me. And Jesus standing commanded him to be brought unto him. And when he was come near, he asked him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said: Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight: thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

PREDICTION OF OUR LORD'S PASSION—THE CURE OF THE BLIND MAN.

IN this Gospel the Church teaches us something of the Passion of Our Lord. About this time of the year a certain part of the world is going crazy with carnival; people imagine it great fun when they put on masks, dance, and walk about in processions. But the Church wishes her children to think of the Passion of Our Lord, and on these days she asks them to be more zealous and fervent.

Sin is the cause of the Passion of Our Lord; we crucify Our Lord again and make Him an object of mockery. We have not the same customs here that exist in Europe at carnival time, but by degrees they are creeping in here, too;

let us consider the great damage it does to the young people of those countries, and draw from it a lesson which will be very useful to us. We can also judge from it what would be the consequence of following similar indulgences at any time of the year. These applications can be made to our picnics, moonlight excursions, and dances. On the approach of the carnival the Church redoubles her prayers, and puts on the garb of penance, because so many sins are committed; for this reason, too, the saints of the Church, the friends of God, do more penance that God may be kind to the people who are indulging in these excesses. St. Francis de Sales used to call the carnival days hours of pain and grief to the Church. What disorders, dissoluteness, unlawful relaxations are committed in those days! St. Vincent Ferrer used to think of the approach of those days with horror, for, with unbounded license, people would commit sin after sin without giving themselves time to think. St. Catharine of Sienna was accustomed to cry out with groans, "Oh, what an unhappy time! what a diabolical time!" Day and night she would invoke Our Lord. When the carnival is open you may well say that heaven is closed. The reprehensible things about the carnival are things that are considered dangerous at all times, such as masquerade balls and theatres. St. John Chrysostom considered the theatre the worst place, where the vilest spiritual diseases may be contracted. St. Augustine called the theatre of his day the pomp of Satan. St. Cyprian speaking of it says it is the innovation of the devil; apply all this to picnics and balls too. Now, my good young people, whom would you rather believe; would you rather believe your own passions that drag you into considering these things small matters; would you rather believe our modern, loose Christians, who consider the theatre the school of virtue? Or would you not rather believe those great doctors whom I have quoted, who studied much, and who were enlightened by almighty God? You will say that you always criticise the title of a play before you go. That is nonsense;

you know that the name of a play does not give a clue as to whether it is moral or not. What about masquerade balls? The dance is one of the greatest occasions of evil, especially for young people. A youth that loves the ball-room will sooner or later fall into grave sin. "He who jokes with the devil," says St. Peter Chrysologus, "cannot reign with Christ." St. John Chrysostom declared vehemently against dancing; he says it is the innovation of the devil, and those who engage in it cannot escape the snares of the devil. All the saints have said the same thing.

During these days of the carnival, especially, let us not form part of the world that has gone crazy, we may say. There is no objection to modest recreation nor to simple enjoyments. Endeavor to compensate Our Lord Jesus for so many sins committed during this time. With great love, visit a church where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, pray, and receive from Him spiritual joy of which the world knows nothing. In this way you will not put your salvation in jeopardy nor will you, as often happens, ruin the health of the body, as is frequently the case. I myself have seen on the last days of the carnival a funeral procession, and on asking for whom such display was made, was told that it was the funeral of a youth of sixteen years. A few days previously he had taken part in the carnival procession; he had gone to the theatre and to a masked ball. Here he had become overheated, caught cold, contracted pneumonia, and in a few days died. Had he obeyed his parents, had he been reasonable in his enjoyments, he might have saved his life.

But let us return to the Gospel; while Jesus was in the vicinity of Jericho, a poor blind man who sat by the wayside begging, hearing the approach of a great crowd, asked what this might be. They told him that the Great Prophet, the Son of David, was passing by. Then he raised his voice as high as he could, and cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Can you not easily see in this poor blind man the figure of a poor sinner? How terrible is the blindness of

sinners! They know that by sinning they lose God, that God who created them and redeemed them; they know that they have lost the right to heaven; they sin frequently and without any remorse. What blindness thus to insult almighty God, in whose presence they commit these sins; that God who could annihilate them or could at any moment precipitate them into the flames of hell! Sometimes, by the grace of God, the blind sinners open their eyes to the real state of their souls; they see their misery and their danger, and return to God while it is yet time, and break the chains that hold them bound to the servitude of the devil. Then they ask themselves: Who is this Jesus who is passing by? The truth will suddenly shine on their souls. This is the Saviour of souls, the healer of the blind and of all diseases, especially of the soul. Then in earnest they will raise their voices to Our Lord and cry out in humility and compunction of heart, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." But you know that the world does not like these exhibitions of piety, the fashionable world does not want to be disturbed by these cries. The passions so natural to our frailty and increased by indulgence, are urged on by the devil, who gives us occasions of sin. Our old companions who continue in their evil course would like us to do the same; these lay their hands on the mouth of the sinner that he may not cry out, and tell him that he should be ashamed to make such an outcry. This is the inner voice that we feel; the voice of conscience that admonishes us and the voice of the body that speaks of enjoyments that are the death of the soul. How the sinner hates to be disturbed by these contending claims! The good voice is hated by the sinner, and he tries to silence it. Again he shuts his eyes and listens to the wicked voice, so that joyously and carelessly he goes on sinning. He has abused once more the grace of the voice of God speaking to his soul. Sinners become ashamed of having ever been modest and pure in word and action, ashamed of ever having loved God, and ridicule the holy maxims of the Gospel. What blindness and

perversity this is! Should any of my hearers be of the number of those who have been blind, let them arouse themselves by prayer, and then the grace of light will also come to them. How tearfully and sadly St. Augustine describes these dreadful days of his own blindness, "I went from one disorder to another, from one precipice to another, like one that was blind."

When Jesus heard His name called in that strong way, He stopped, and gave orders that they should bring the poor man to Him. "What wilt thou that I should do for thee?" asked Our Lord with the most loving condescension. "Ah, Lord, you see what I need. I am a miserable blind man, give me the light of my eyes." What a beautiful prayer, how short, how affectionate it was, what great good it accomplished. This same petition we too should continually make. "Lord, that I may see." This spiritual blindness, ignorance, and darkness must be removed; we must be able to see clearly. Give me intelligence, that I may know things rightly, that I may from my earliest days know the wickedness of sin, for now in my blindness it looks so attractive and so beautiful. Lord, make me see the great danger there is in the world, that I may be on my guard and not fall a willing prey to the wiles of Satan. Lord, let me know what company I must avoid, let me see the foolishness of thinking much of riches, excepting in so far as I may be able to use them for the good of others. It is vanity to indulge the appetites of the flesh and to desire that which, if consented to, will bring upon me great punishment. Let me, O Lord, see the vanity of wishing for a long life; give me the grace to be contented with a short one and so to labor during it that I may enjoy the heavenly sight of paradise.

The good Lord answered the prayer of the blind man, saying, "Thy faith has cured thee," and immediately the eyes of the blind man received their sight. Filled with joy he followed Our Lord, giving Him praise, and all the people who saw the great miracle also gave praise to God. See, my

young people, what grateful recognition you owe to almighty God for the corporal and spiritual light of your body and soul. How often has God given the power of vision to your soul! You certainly remember the darkness in which your soul was cast when you fell into mortal sin. Bodily blindness may bring some good to the soul, for then we cannot see the dangerous occasions which might lead us into sin; the alluring aspect of the objects of our passions cannot be seen by us, and hence cannot excite our imagination; but the blindness of the soul gives the devil power over us. As soon as God enlightened your soul you saw the dangerous situation in which you were. He stretched out His hands to raise you up, and what appeared to you so beautiful and attractive now looked so hideous that you were terrified, and willingly fled from it. What a great grace this was to you! He made you know what was good, and gave you grace to love it. Thank almighty God for these spiritual gifts, praise Him for being so good to you. We cannot sufficiently appreciate what God has done for us in giving understanding and light to our soul; but we will know it when, after witnessing the damnation of many souls, we will at last find ourselves in heaven.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* iv. 1-11. *At that time:* Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry. And the tempter coming, said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him upon a pinnacle of the temple, and said to him: If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written: That he hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him: It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain: and showed him all the kingdoms of the world,

and the glory of them, and said to him: All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan: for it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil left him: and behold angels came and ministered to him.

THE FORTY DAYS' FAST OF OUR LORD.

WHEN reading this day's Gospel, what person is there that is not astonished at our dear Lord who, by a rigorous and continued fast of forty days and forty nights, condescended to show us how to mortify the flesh. He was the flower of innocence, the lily of the valley, the lamb without stain. Why did He wish to undergo this fast? To give us an example of penance and mortification. We are now beginning the days of abstinence and of fast, called Lent, which the holy Church enjoins. Now, my good young people, were I preaching to older persons, who are bound to observe the fast, I would have to preach on the unwillingness of many to inconvenience themselves by doing anything contrary to the demands of their appetites. They have no reason for not obeying the law, and still they find many excuses for evading it. But, speaking to you, my dear young people, who are not yet obliged to fast, I must insist that these are days of public penance and that you also are obliged to do something, however little, something of mortification and penance, in order to prepare for the great feast of Easter. When in the time of the Jews the prophets announced a fast, not only were those of mature age included in it but the young, even the infants and the domestic animals. But, you will ask, What penances are we to do? Are we to fast, to take the discipline, and put on sackcloth? It might be advisable to counsel these rigors to many a youth whose conscience is marked by the ravages of sin. St. Paul tells us, "As you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity, so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification." St. Ambrose wrote to a poor girl that had fallen into

sin, "There is no other remedy for you except penance; inflict punishment on your body, tame it by fasting, cover it with ashes and groan under the hair shirt."

My good young people, I cannot be hard on you. I would rather be indulgent, because I think you have not stained your souls with great crimes; I do not enjoin a strict fast on you, only I pray you do not lose sight in these days of Lent, of the fact that you owe to the call of the Church some little mortification. Would it not be an easy and at the same time a most grateful sacrifice if you ate only at your meals? Could you not at breakfast take merely a piece of bread and a cup of coffee or milk? Could you not sometimes refuse a drink that you like very much? It is certain that the mortification of the palate is a most powerful means to enable us to restrain our passions. A horse that is not obedient to the bridle has to be subdued by other means, sometimes much more severe; so it is with the soul and body. If the body will not obey the law of God, and will even drag the soul down after unlawful pleasures, severe means must be used to bring it under submission. All the saints have performed works of penance, and the practice of mortification was one of the most profitable used in subjugating the body. Then these little abstinences gives us health and prolong our lives. It stands to reason that we must not give the body all that it craves. Even in olden times the Romans knew this, and pagan moralists have shown us that to be healthy a simple and rigorous diet is the very best. The appetites of the body are curious, and make very extravagant demands on us. See the drunkard, how his thirst cannot be satisfied except by copious draughts of spirituous liquors. The drunkard's life affords us sufficient proof of the unhappiness of unbridled appetites. Unless you mortify the flesh, it will become unmanageable, will lead you into terrible sin, and then to eternal damnation. When St. Francis of Assisi lay on his death-bed, seeing his body nothing but bones, he said, "My body, do you see now that I loved you well, and did well in

treating you harshly? Now our penances are over; there are no more fasts, and you will see in a short time what a reward it has brought you."

Having now spoken to you of fasting, let me speak of those who eat meat without being restrained in any way by the law of the Church. Such Catholics, though they retain the name, might better leave the ranks of the children of the Church; they would then, at least, not give scandal to others. Be faithful to the laws of the Church; the very care you take not to eat meat on forbidden days is in itself a fast. You will say there is not much in eating a piece of meat, but let us take an example related in the book of Machabees. Eleazar was an old man, who practised the Jewish law; by an edict of the king he was to eat pork, which was forbidden by the law of Moses. He was to suffer death unless he complied with it, but the grand old man was firm, and would rather undergo any torture than yield to the demand. Some of his friends who stood about advised him to make believe he had eaten, which would have satisfied the cruel king, but the old man absolutely refused; he would rather suffer the penalty than give such an example to the young. Having declared his unchangeable intention, he was at last dragged to death.

But to return to the Gospel. The devil saw that Our Lord was weak from His long fast, and assuming a visible human form he presented himself before Jesus, and said: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. You can certainly do this, for God will hear you and you will then have enough for all your necessities." Listen to the answer of Our Lord, "It is written, not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." He wished us to understand that it is not so much the food of the body that we should be solicitous about, but rather the spiritual help we find in the word of God. How many are there who think daily and hourly of the food of the body, while the word of God is never consid-

ered. Think of the smartness of the devil; how he puts on the outward appearance of fairness and fitness. He does not advise that the bread should be stolen, or even earned by honest labor, but counsels that the bread should be got by a miracle and by prayer. Does not the devil often appear to us under the same garb? He does not advise a young lad to become a great thief at once, for he might be frightened at that, but he might take a few pennies or dimes that can be abstracted without discovery. This is such a small matter that it would be unbearable scrupulosity to mind it. He begins with little things, until you are hardened to these petty thefts, and he ends by giving you courage to commit a robbery. Behold, he has succeeded in making you a full-fledged thief! The devil will not tempt you to say bad words, nor to enter into bad conversation, but he will put into your mouth words of double meaning; he will introduce you to companions who are not exactly bad, for in that case you might be shocked and keep away from them, but to one who is on the way of being spoiled; he and you join your inclinations, and soon end in doing mischief; you may begin by disliking your confessor, so that you go to confession less frequently; the devil will furnish you with many excuses for omitting your prayers or for saying them hurriedly until he at last brings you to the point when you do not pray at all. Such are the artifices of Satan, and you know from experience in your own case and observation of others how often he succeeds.

The devil, though struck with the answer he received from Our Lord, did not desist. He took Him up to the roof of the Temple and placing Him on the pinnacle said, "If Thou be the Son of God cast Thyself down, for it is written: that He hath given His angels charge over Thee and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." Our Lord answered, "It is written thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Not only did Jesus wish to reprimand the devil in this answer, but He had us also in His mind when He said these words. We should not expose

ourselves to the danger of falling into sin, expecting that God would draw us out unhurt. We must therefore avoid the occasions of sin, for in the book of Ecclesiasticus we read, "He that loveth danger shall perish in it." It will not be an excuse to say, "I will be on my guard, I will be careful and watchful not to fall into sin." Remember that if you place yourself in danger, you may say that you have already fallen. St. Bernard very strongly says, "It is a greater miracle when in voluntary occasion of sin not to fall than to raise the dead to life." God has not promised us the help of angels under all circumstances, He has not promised us help when we place ourselves on the edge of a precipice. It is true the angels will go with us until we come to the very occasion of sin, but then they veil their faces with their wings, and are sorry for the folly which is going to lead us into ruin. The devil must have been ashamed of the failure of his second effort, but even then he did not stop; again he took Our Lord and placed Him on a very high mountain, where all the expanse of this glorious world could be seen, where the beautiful palaces shone forth from the wooded hills, where the kingdoms of this world could be observed. Showing Him these, the Evil One said: "All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me." The devil has reached the very depth of degradation; he did not propose this act of idolatry at once, but came to it by degrees, never running away, never abashed or frightened till he reached this point. Christ then rose in His anger and drove the devil from Him, repeating the divine precept, "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." Driven off by the divine power the devil left Our Saviour, and angels came and ministered unto Him.

Often has the devil made to you the same proposition, "All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and adore me." What beautiful things does not Satan suggest, if you will surrender yourself to his service; honors, pleasures, riches, liberty, and happiness, he brings before your mind,

and he promises them to you just for that little act of adoration. But are these his to give? He lies, for he is the father of lies. We are sometimes deceived by these promises, and the world looks as if it really belonged to the devil. The rich who are not good enjoy this world; the poor who are God's poor have to suffer want, sickness, and privation. The world which is far from God appears to be happy, for it seems to have all the good things; while the children of God have only the fear of God and many temptations, and they have to avoid sinful pleasures. No wonder the youth is deceived and dragged away into the slavery of Satan with the hope of obtaining these glorious promises. Remember the story of the prodigal son; he, too, thought the devil would give him worldly pleasures of every kind, but he was soon undeceived; he found himself in misfortune, and begging for the husks intended for the swine; not even this was given him. Believe not the devil or any of his promises. I have resolved to serve another master, my good God, my Creator, Him only will I adore; and He can and will make me really happy—if not in this world, which is after all of short duration, at least for all eternity with His angels in paradise.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* xvii. 1-9. *At that time:* Jesus taketh unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him. And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshaded them. And lo a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him. And the disciples hearing, fell upon their face: and were very much afraid. And Jesus came and touched them: and said to them: Arise, and fear not. And they lifting up their

eyes saw no one, but only Jesus. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD.

I WANT to speak to you to-day of heaven. But what am I to say of that blessed place? It is as if I would take a coal from the blazing fire and, with it as an illustration, should try to explain to you the glory of the sun. The saints, who we may say had a foretaste of heaven, would cry out, "O paradise! O paradise!" and could say no more, as if they were wrapt in an ecstasy of delight. St. Paul tells us that he saw and heard things that no tongue could tell, nor eye ever contemplate, in fact the truth of the reality has never entered the mind of a human being, "what God has prepared for those who love Him." St. Catharine of Sienna was admitted into paradise; in an ecstasy she told Blessed Raymondo, "I have seen such things as would be impossible for me to tell in words, and if I could describe it you could not comprehend it." If on entering a palace you are struck with its riches and beauty, its magnificent corridors hung with beautiful pictures, its grand statues and furniture, splendid carpets and rugs, the walls covered with gold, then think how much more magnificent must be the house of the King of kings, the Creator of heaven and earth. St. Fulgentius at one time saw the grandeur of the city of Rome, when it was illuminated for a great feast; his mind turned to the beauties of paradise and he said, "How beautiful must be the celestial Jerusalem, if Rome is so magnificent!" If in this world so much honor is given to those who love its vanities, how much more honor and glory will not God give to those who deserve it after a good life? A palace of this world, when compared to the celestial dwelling of the just, would be no more than the dingy, smoky hut of a savage: the most picturesque garden, compared to the garden of heaven, would be like a dismal

desert. According to the Apocalypse gold is as plentiful in heaven as dust on this earth, the streets are of the purest gold. St. John in describing the city of heaven tells us that it is a square, having twelve gates of the most precious stones. Jeremias, the prophet, tells us that he could not describe the immensity of this city, its towers and walls built of transparent crystals. Isaias calls it a city of pleasure. Better is a day here than thousands in the habitations of this world.

When you arrive in this beautiful city you will first see your guardian angel, who will congratulate you. At last all the labor is over, no more pain, afflictions, or sufferings. What thanks will not your soul pour forth to that angel for having conducted you through so many difficulties, defended you from so many enemies who were besetting you to rob you of your future happiness! You will meet there glorious processions of the heavenly citizens, who will rejoice in your arrival. What joy there will be to meet your good parents, your friends; what a recognition! What happiness to meet your good companions, who by their example and modest words made your start in life a holy one and your continuance in it successful! You will bless the day that you broke off with bad companions who had great pleasure in the world in sin. You will be happy again in meeting your teachers, to whom you will not be able to render sufficient thanks for the advice given you, and to whom, after God, you owe gratitude for the happy privilege of being now safe in the haven of eternal bliss. What happiness will you not feel to see those saints to whom you have prayed, and whom you have honored in life. You will see St. Joseph, the foster-father of Our Lord, the Apostles of Christ, St. John, St. Peter, St. Paul, and all the other saints, of whom you have heard so much: you will cast yourself at their feet to pour out to them your fervent thanks. They will say, "No longer are we your protectors, but your companions and sharers in the glory of the Lord. You are no longer guests and pilgrims, but permanent

inhabitants of heaven." They will pay you the respect due to your victory; you will receive greater honors than if you were kings and princes. Is it possible, my dear young people, that because you refuse to give up a bad companion, or a sin, you would resign the right to all this future glory, and refuse to become the companion of the pure angels and the glorious saints?

What happiness you will feel when you are brought to the throne of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, advocate of sinners and your mother also! How beautiful she is! So beautiful is she that you would gladly be blind all your life just for this one look at her. You will fall prostrate at her feet, kiss the hem of her garments and with gratitude you will cry out, "By your aid I am now in paradise: you have been so kind to me in my wanderings and now you have brought me to this unmerited glory." What joy must it not be to see Mary, to hear her speak in the musical words of heaven! She will embrace and caress you. Then from the throne of Mary there is but a step to that of her divine Son, Jesus. Yes, you shall behold Jesus, living in a holy and glorious humanity. What rays of light and of glory will shine forth from that countenance! If a hundred suns were to unite their glorious rays they would not be comparable to the glory of the face of Christ.

It is said of St. Teresa that she once saw in spirit for a moment the sacred and adorable humanity of Our Lord, and was so enraptured by the vision that the sun in its meridian appeared pale and without warmth in comparison to Him. From here you will be conducted to the throne of the Blessed Trinity, and you will fix your gaze on the centre of all good, the fountain of all beatitude, the abyss of inaccessible light. To see God! Yes, this is the very essence of the glory and happiness of all eternity! You will be lost in ecstasy for the torrent of joy which will inundate your soul. You will see God, you will love Him, you will possess Him; as St. Augustine tells us, "You shall see the happiness of

God, you will be rich with His riches." But when shall that blessed day dawn when we shall be in heaven? It will come, my dear young people, very soon, as soon as this life is over. We all wish to go to heaven—that is our general desire. But remember the inscription that will be seen at the portals of paradise, and which concerns you very much: "This is no place for dogs who are filthy, no place for the impure, the revengeful—in short, no place for the sinner. The innocent alone and those of a pure heart may enter." Can you even bear the thought in your mind that this happiness is not for you, that the blood of the Redeemer was shed for you in vain, and that He will not open the gates of heaven for you? Our Lord once said to St. Catharine of Sienna, after having made her feel a little of the happiness of paradise, "See, My daughter, of what great happiness the sinner deprives himself, and to what dreadful torments he is blindly rushing." Keep your eyes always on heaven, my dear young people; that is your fatherland, your inheritance, your kingdom: rouse yourselves to serve Our Lord faithfully, to practise good works courageously, to avoid evil, and rather suffer death than renounce heaven.

We read in the Sacred Scriptures of a mother whose seven sons were apprehended by a cruel tyrant, and terrible torments were inflicted on them before her very eyes. The skin of their heads was pulled off with the hair, their hands and feet were cut off, their tongues were cut out, they were roasted at a slow fire, and in these torments she saw six of them die. One still remained, the youngest, the handsomest, the one most dear to her heart. The tyrant turned to the mother and said, "Have compassion on this one that is left; make him adore the idols, make him obey me, and you shall have him safe and sound. But if you refuse, my bitterest hate shall fall on him, and when he is gone I will apply the same tortures to you, until you also close your eyes in death." Then the mother pressed the youth to her bosom, bathed his sweet face with tears of affection, and said, "I beseech thee,

my son, look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them: and consider, that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also: So thou shalt not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren." The youth allowed himself to be scourged, and suffered the greatest torments, and so was found worthy to enter heaven. What do you say now? With you the question is not whether you have to pass through fire and sword to obtain heaven. God requires less of you. He wants you to persevere in the good way in which you have been educated, obedient to your superiors, faithful to your prayers and in the frequent use of the sacraments. He asks you only to curb your passions. Many have done great things to gain heaven, as you have heard. The martyrs sacrificed their lives—will you do less than they? Will you for a momentary pleasure renounce heaven? Will you rather be a devil in hell than a saint in paradise? Think seriously of this, and then decide nobly that, cost what it may, you will do all in your power, with the grace of God, to merit that eternal reward that awaits all those that are faithful to the end.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

GOSPEL. *Luke* xi. 14-28. *At that time:* Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb. And when he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke; and the multitude were in admiration at it: but some of them said: He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. And others tempting, asked of him a sign from heaven. But he, seeing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall. And if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because you say, that through Beelzebub I cast out devils. Now if I cast out devils by Beelzebub: by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I, by the finger of God, cast out devils: doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his court: those things are in peace which he possesseth. But if a

stronger than he come upon him and overcome him: he will take away all his armor wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest: and not finding, he saith: I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there. And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. And it came to pass as he spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd lifting up her voice said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck. But he said: Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.

THE CURE OF THE MAN POSSESSED BY THE DEVIL.

Our loving Redeemer, in all His journeys through Judea, performed many works of mercy and kindness to poor humanity. All the sick people who could approach Him were cured, the blind received their sight, the deaf heard, the lame walked, and even the dead were raised to life. He was the great wonder-worker of those days, and the sick and unfortunate especially flocked around Him.

But not only did He work miracles—He also led a most holy life, a life that was an example to every one. In Him there was no defect, no vice, no fault. From all this it would appear to us that He should be known by all as the Messias. The crowds, indeed, knew Him, but they were the common people, who followed, loved, and adored Him as their Saviour. But the Pharisees were not of this class; they were full of envy of Jesus because He was not of their school; they calumniated and persecuted Him; His greatest and holiest actions were presented in a bad light, and in this very day's Gospel we have an example of their perversity. Our Lord had cast out the devil, and the Pharisees, with a significant shake of the head and frightened mien, said, "This man casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of

devils." There are many in the world that imitate the Pharisees; whatever good is done by a person is looked at in a bad light; evil purposes are attributed to the purest intentions. Young people are much given to this sort of criticism; they are so thoughtless that they will say almost anything of another. They see a companion serious and pious, and they say he is crazy, or a devotee; here is one that goes to communion regularly—and they call him a hypocrite; here is a noble young fellow, polite and good to his masters and obedient to their directions—they say he is a mean, sneaky character and does it all to obtain power; a retired, quiet boy is considered a fool; if he is found praying in church, they make fun of his devotion; in fact, the bad boy cannot see any good in a well-behaved, religious lad. It is a singular thing, but nevertheless true, that jealousy is in our hearts, especially in regard to the good qualities of our companions. All the good they have seems to detract from us, and we cannot acknowledge ourselves inferior to others. It is an abominable trait, hateful to God and to our fellow creatures. Then speak no evil of the goodness of others; commend your good companions, love them the more, recommend them to the notice of others, and make up your mind to avoid the company of evil talkers and detractors. If this detraction should strike you, and make you feel the injustice of mankind, continue in your goodness, let them talk. Would you become bad because the wicked see no good in you? Did Our Lord change the manner of His life when the Pharisees spoke evil of Him? On the contrary, He quietly continued, as if He did not hear them at all.

The devil had deprived the poor man of the power of speech, not for his own good you may be sure; he might have left him the use of his tongue, and instigated him to speak very much evil: for though the tongue is a small member, it can do an immense amount of harm. Just consider for a minute what the tongue can do: the blasphemies against God, the frauds against men, detraction, deception,

bad counsel, immodest words, ridicule of religion and religious usages; these are the fruits of an unguarded tongue. St. James tells us that the tongue is the universe of iniquity. If our young people were only dumb in regard to the vices of the tongue, they would not have to answer for so many sins or for the eternal ruin of their companions. St. Vincent Ferrer relates an example of a dumb woman who was brought to him to be cured. "What do you wish me to do for you, my daughter?" She, that had never spoken before, said, "Give me the knowledge of how to live a holy and spiritual life, besides the faculty of speech." St. Vincent replied, "Yes, you shall have the first request, but as to the faculty of speech I will not obtain it for you; it is better to save yourself without being able to speak, than to damn your soul by the sins of the tongue. Even though now you have spoken you will again become dumb."

How many men at the judgment-seat will wish that they had been born dumb, when they see that they have lost their souls by the faculty of speech! As I said before, the devil did not deprive this youth of whom we are treating in this Gospel of speech for his own good. Satan never does anything for our good, but for our destruction. The devil's delight is to make men spiritually dumb; he enters into their hearts, takes possession of them, and makes them incapable of speaking. They become mute and do not open their mouths in prayer; even when pressed by the greatest need they cannot go to confession. They have committed a great sin and he makes them tremble with fear; they would rather conceal the poison in their breast than confess the fault. Bold as men are before committing a crime, they are real cowards after it is done; he suggests to the poor sinner that he will lose the esteem and good opinion of the confessor; that he will be scandalized, that he will scold and that he will deny him absolution. No, my dear children, allow not yourselves to be led away by the devil. The confessor does not think less of his penitent by hearing his confession; on

the contrary he is impressed by his openheartedness; he is not scandalized at the recital of sins, he only sees an example of faith and piety; he will not scold, only to put you on your guard and give you the necessary advice to escape faults in the future; and if he does scold, it is because, aroused by the danger you are in, he wants to put sufficient emphasis to his words, so that you may appreciate the importance of your fall. The confessor will never deny absolution except in cases where he sees that there is going to be no effort made at correction. Be on your guard, my dear young people, against sin; but should you commit any, make up your mind at once to get rid of that dark stain on your conscience by a sincere confession. Oh, what miseries are heaped up by those who conceal their sins! All their confessions are worthless; the sin of sacrilege is added to the rest, their condition is even worse than it was before. Then there is the danger that when a sin is once concealed, it will close the mouth of the penitent so effectually that even at the hour of death it will not be revealed, as we find in many cases. An unhappy woman was ashamed to confess a certain sin. She fell seriously ill, and her confessor was called; when she saw him she cried out, "You have come in time to see a lying penitent of yours go to hell. I have often confessed to you, but have always concealed the graver faults." He begged her to make her confession, but she said, "I cannot, I am damned!" and she breathed her last.

When you have overcome this dumb devil by a good confession, and he shall have gone away from you, have the doors of your heart well under observation that he may not come back again; then you will have peace of mind. "When a strong man well armed guards his house, all that he has will be secure." Our Lord does not say to guard the interior, but He desires you to have special care of the entrance. And why? Because when the door of the soul, by which all manner of evil may enter, is not looked after, there will be little

hope of your continuing in good. Is it not written, "He who loveth danger shall perish in it"?

Easter is near, and you wish to make a good confession; you desire to be really converted. Then you will have to make a good and firm resolution not only to avoid sin, but to watch every approach to the soul. If your conversion is not of this kind it will not be real, and you will not persevere to the end. You cannot imagine all the tricks the devil is going to employ to catch you again. When the devil has gone out of a man, he wanders about in lonesome places, looking for a home; but not finding a suitable one he will say to himself, I will go back to the soul from which I came. He finds the soul cleansed and beautifully ornamented with virtues, a thing not at all to his taste, and he sees that the soul evidently thinks herself strong. He goes and takes with him seven others worse than himself; they make a sudden attack by wily means, and again they triumph; they enter, and the last condition of that soul is worse than the first. The devil will not quietly give up what he has lost; he makes every possible effort, employs every artifice to regain possession. He tempts the poor soul with a sense of false security, he follows her in all her acts of piety and devotion, he fills her imagination with magnificent promises. "All these things will I give thee." He would give the whole world if it were his, to gain his point. You can, from this, form an idea of the value of a soul, when you see the devil make such efforts to gain it. You can see how valuable it is, when it has cost the life of Our Lord to ransom it from the grasp of the enemy. What insanity, then, to think the soul of little worth! From henceforth have a great care of your soul; do not sell it to the devil for any price; certainly not for a momentary pleasure, or for some unlawful satisfaction.

When the devil has come into possession of your soul for the second time, how hard it will be to dislodge him again; if he takes seven other devils worse than himself, how much stronger will be his hold; he will rivet the chains firmer.

The devil does in your case as you would do to a bird that has escaped the meshes of your net; you will choose stronger cords, and should you succeed in alluring it to the net again, you will make sure that it shall not escape a second time. The devil would do with you as you would do to a slave who has struck off his chains. You would put heavier chains on him, and keep such a guard over him that it would be impossible for him to get away. So also will the devil shut off every avenue of approach to your relief. Should you find some benefit to your soul from the reading of a good book, he will lead you to places where there are none to fall into your hands; should you have an opportunity to hear a good sermon that would perhaps open your eyes, he will lure you to plays and enjoyments. In this way he will use every artifice and all the cunning of which he is master, until at last you will be firmly under his dominion. And thus it is that the last state is worse than the first. So it is that those who fall again into the slavery of Satan rarely find the power of resistance until they are led to the gates of hell. May such a terrible thing never happen to you; that having put the devil from you, you should again make peace with him and allow him to regain your soul.

When Our Lord had concluded His words, such admiration came over the crowd that they could no longer contain themselves, and a certain woman cried out, "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the paps that gave Thee suck." Our Lord was certainly conscious of the great glory of His Mother Mary, but He answered, "Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." Be of the number of those happy and blessed ones. The Pharisees heard the word of God, but kept it not. You, my good children, listen with simplicity of heart and with humility. Many have gone and many will go to heaven because they heard the word of God and kept it. St. John of God was a wanderer on the face of the earth; he had run away from his home: was twice a soldier, and was once condemned to death.

He had the happiness once to hear a sermon; he heard it with a contrite and humble heart, he fell on his face in the church, publicly confessed his sins, and rose to become a saint.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

Gospel. *John* vi. 1-15. *At that time:* Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias: and a great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased. Jesus therefore went up into a mountain: and there he sat with his disciples. Now the Pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand. When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to him, he said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to try him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him: Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to him: There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many? Then Jesus said: Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were sat down: in like manner also of the fishes as much as they would. And when they were filled, he said to his disciples: Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost. They gathered up therefore, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above to them that had eaten. Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world. Jesus therefore when he knew that they would come to take him by force and make him king, fled again into the mountain himself alone.

JESUS FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE WITH FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES.

It is always a grand, inspiring sight to see young people come together in great numbers to hear the word of God, to consider the wonderful deeds of God, and listen to His beau-

tiful discourses, which have been preserved in the gospels. To-day there is proposed to our consideration the wonderful feeding of five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes.

The evening was approaching, and still the crowd, charmed by the words of Our Lord in His sublime instruction, made not the least move to leave Him and go to their homes in the city, nor did they even think of procuring food. Our Lord was still busy healing the sick. What a preacher He must have been! You see the mass of people, closely gathered about Him, listening with eagerness to every word addressed to them, and so intent are they that they forget their food. In the time of Our Lord there were thousands who went to Him with a good heart; He loved them for it and this evening they were to be the guests of the divine Master. In our day we do not as a rule find that hunger after the word of God; people do not like sermons, and especially young people can hardly contain themselves and sit still to listen to the word of God. Parents can plead and threaten, the confessor can admonish, the pastor shows his zeal in vain. But what great damage results to our soul from this carelessness! From this comes that ignorance of religion and God and blindness of the mind which is the mother of all evil. From this you can trace the hardness of men's hearts, obstinacy in vice and sin, and at last eternal damnation. There is not, says St. Bernard, a more certain sign of people losing their immortal souls than their aversion to the word of God.

One day as St. Hilary was about to preach, after having finished the reading of the Gospel, many got up to go out. The saintly preacher was stirred, and he called to them to return and resume their places, saying, "You are going out, but you will not so easily go out of hell." It is related of St. Anthony of Padua that he wanted to preach to a number of heretics, but they all went away and would not listen; he then went to the seashore and began to preach to the fishes. "Listen to the word of God, ye fishes of the sea, for these

unhappy heretics will not listen to me." With that an immense number of fishes gathered as near as they could come to him, with their heads slightly raised out of the water as if they were all attention. When St. Anthony saw this he said, "Blessed be God, for the fishes honor God more than the people of the earth." In many churches is witnessed this eagerness to run away, and to such these words can be applied, "You can easily leave the church, but you cannot so easily get out of hell."

Dear children, if you wish to save your souls and go to heaven, it is absolutely necessary to hear the word of God.

When our dear Lord saw this great crowd of people that had followed Him and had continued with Him so as not to lose one of His discourses, He was touched with compassion for them. Turning to Philip, one of His disciples, He asked him, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Philip answered Him, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little." Our Lord, calling the Apostles about Him, asked, "How many loaves have you?" Andrew answered, "There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes, but what are these among so many?" "Bring Me," said Our Lord, "the little you have, and make the people sit down on the grass." Our Lord then took the loaves, and, raising His eyes to heaven, blessed them, and distributed to them that were sat down.

What a magnificent miracle Our Lord worked for the benefit of His followers on this occasion! Be ye also true followers of Jesus; live in His holy love and fear, and He will provide for you in all your necessities. Would that you were convinced of this! There are, indeed, many who have to undergo terrible sufferings, some even die of hunger; but you must not accuse almighty God of carelessness in their regard. Often it is their own fault on account of the bad lives they have led. Wickedness produces untold evil in this world; you know there are many young people who lead impious and criminal lives, who are Catholics only in name, who never go

to confession, though they have been taught to go from their early childhood; they do not go to communion nor observe Sundays and holydays; they blaspheme the word of God, and they act worse than the brute in the pursuit of the object of their passions. God will not prosper such as these, they cannot have the peace of mind which is the share of those who serve God; they are harassed by discontent and anger, and these vices sometimes produce terrible effects, and could really be a sufficient explanation of much of the misery with which we find poor humanity afflicted. Yes, if sin could be removed from this world, no doubt many of the scourges which come upon us, many sicknesses, terrible and unforeseen deaths, would be removed also and heavenly peace would reign supreme. Often and often we read of this in the word of God. The impious are told that they are hurrying toward their destruction, and the good are the favorite children of God. But, you will say, the good are often afflicted; for we have met them suffering hunger, misery, and persecution. Why does God allow His faithful followers to be so tried, as was the good and holy Job? God permits these trials to the just to purify them, to detach them from the things of this world, and to give them opportunity to merit more for eternal life. God reigns supreme in the hearts of the just; He gives them His grace to suffer with patience whatever may come to them, and this is the reason that these trials are no longer afflictions but rather consolations. St. Paul says, "We glory also in tribulations."

The loaves which fed such a multitude represent the Holy Eucharist. Every day this mystical bread is multiplied and distributed from the altar. What a great gift is this Blessed Sacrament, what a proof of God's love for His children, what a display of His omnipotence! The bread on our altars remains no longer bread; it is changed by the power of Jesus Christ into His sacred body and blood. With this bread you can feed your soul every day.

It is natural to suppose that the crowd that was fed

miraculously had knowledge of it, and ate that blessed bread with avidity. What fervent thanks did they not return to Him who had so favored them! The same joy fills the heart of the generous young man or woman after the reception of the body of the Lord. You have felt this; it is the greatest consolation and the most exquisite enjoyment of your life. Many there are who do not realize what they do, and are cold and indevout. To them communion is without consolation; they go, perhaps from habit or because their companions of a sodality are going in a body, but not that they really hunger after this Bread of life. It is related of a young man, whose wicked parents did not wish him to go to communion, that by some means he eluded their vigilance, and at the very dawn, when no one in the house was yet stirring, he would hasten to first Mass and go to communion; then making his thanksgiving on his way back, he went to bed again before any one had noticed his absence. This young man appreciated the happiness of holy communion. Let us approach this sacred banquet and eat our fill; we will derive strength and endurance from it. If Our Lord sees us approach with affection, He will return love for love and be the greatest friend we have.

But you, smaller children, my lambs, who have not yet had the happiness of drawing so closely to Our Lord, look forward to the day of your first communion; you are now learning the teachings of the Church concerning the real presence; you are beginning to distinguish this Bread of angels from ordinary bread, and as soon as you reach the use of reason you will be admitted to the divine festival. Be anxious to know your holy faith by learning the Catechism; try to realize that it is Jesus you are going to receive, and begin now to form in your heart sentiments of great love and desire.

Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, when a young child, had a great desire to go to communion; but she was denied the happiness because she was not old enough. She had a great knowledge

of Jesus on the altar in the Blessed Sacrament, and spent hours on her knees in the church. At one time her mother went to communion and little Magdalen saw her. How beautiful her mother looked! The child was so struck at the sight that she begged to be allowed to make her first communion, that she, too, might feel that great happiness. She afterwards called the days of communion days of love.

I cannot persuade myself even now to cease speaking of the Blessed Sacrament. Approach the altar with exterior as well as interior reverence and holy fear. Let the world, your companions and the parish, see that you realize the sacred act in which you are engaged. Your mind must be centred on the great God whom you are to receive, and you certainly know that you owe Him fervent love and holy fear. St. Thomas à Kempis, in his "Following of Christ," says, "If you had the purity of the angels or the sanctity of a John the Baptist, you would not be worthy to touch this Holy Sacrament." Holy men and women know that they are not good enough to go to communion; still they go because Our Lord draws them to it. With what severity they judge themselves and make their confession, so that every stain of sin may be effaced! It is a dreadful action to go to Jesus and receive Him who is the God of the universe.

After this great number of people had been fed, they were enthusiastic; they wished to take Jesus and make Him their king. But Our Lord wanted no temporal dominions, so He hid Himself from them. He wishes to be king of your heart. After having received Our Lord, it is your duty to make Him the king and master of your soul. Be faithful to Him, be not a disciple like Judas, who betrayed Him. No longer allow the devil to have the direction of your actions. Let Our Lord alone have His throne there, Jesus the good Master, the Prince of peace, the God of joy and of all consolation. A great missionary once laying his finger on a wicked man's heart asked, "Who reigns in this heart, God or the devil?" Ask yourselves the same question, and your conscience will

give the answer; in fact, you know it already, if you are in real earnest about your eternal welfare.

PASSION SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *John* viii. 46-59. *At that time, Jesus said to the multitude of the Jews:* Which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me? He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God. The Jews therefore answered and said to him: Do not we say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered: I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and you have dishonored me. But I seek not my own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen, I say to you: if any man keep my word, he shall not see death forever. The Jews therefore said: Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets: and thou sayest: If any man keep my word, he shall not taste death forever. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Whom dost thou make thyself? Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifieth me, of whom you say that he is your God, and you have not known him: but I know him: and if I shall say that I know him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know him, and do keep his word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see my day: he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said to him: Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

THE PHARISEES ACCUSE OUR LORD.

OUR divine Lord proves to the Jews that they are not worthy of His efforts to convert them, because they did not, nor did their forefathers, ever listen to God's commands. They were obstinate and accused Him of wrongdoing; Our Lord makes the clear demand, "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" and adds, "If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God, heareth the words of

God; therefore you hear them not because you are not of God."

Yes, my dearly beloved young people, Jesus Christ could say with the fullest truth that He was without sin, for He is the immaculate Lamb, the spotless Lily, and Sanctity itself. He is God, who cannot sin. It was a blasphemy to call Christ a sinner and companion of wicked people, when they knew from His public life that He was guilty of no wrongdoing, though they often accused Him of it. But Our Lord refutes these calumnies, and challenges His accusers to bring proof of their accusations: and on this day, so near His sacred Passion, He vindicates His whole life before them. Can we say the same thing of ourselves? With truth it can be said of us that we are sinners. St. John tells us in his Gospel: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Your own conscience tells you, my dear young friends, that often and often have you sinned. Many of you might say with truth that you have committed many sins and serious ones too. How was it that you fell into sin so easily? You never considered the heinousness of sin—that was the reason; you considered sin so slight a matter, you even thought it an occasion to have a little fun, but as to the seriousness of it, you never gave it a thought. St. Augustine says that sin is the greatest of all evils, an infinite evil, the only evil. It is an infinite evil, because the offence is directed against God, who is infinite in His holiness. It is an insult to God. Do you know what it is to despise God, and insult God, and injure as far as lies in your power the infinite glory of the Creator of heaven and earth? The seriousness of an injury is estimated by the dignity of the person insulted. Should you strike a companion in the face, you have done a bad act; if you slapped a minister of God's altar, you certainly see that your offence is greater; if you were bold enough to do it to a bishop, it would be more serious yet. If you should raise your hand to strike the Vicar of Christ on

earth, the Pope, what horror for the act would not the whole world feel! But to offend God, who is infinitely superior in greatness to a bishop or a priest or the Holy Father, ought to be to our hearts a most abominable crime. God is that infinite Being who reigns in heaven, who has created all there is in heaven and on earth; He calls to the sea and it becomes calm. He who called the sun into existence, and who could blow it out again like the flame of a candle, is the all-powerful Lord, yet it is against Him that the sinner raises his hand. St. Bernard says, "Just think that an atom of a creature, an atom of dust so small and insignificant that without the aid of a microscope one would not know of its existence, rises in rebellion against this King of kings." Is it not great boldness in this nothingness to stand up against such power? You remember the fate of the devil; he, too, in his pride, revolted against his Maker, but what was he in the hands of God? Powerful as God had made him and immortal, still God could easily hurl him into the abyss of hell. How terrible a thing it is to have God for our enemy! If we brought on ourselves the hatred of a king or any potentate, we would have to fear very much, lest he would do us a great deal of harm; we would be in constant dread of being thrown into prison. The anger of God is a great deal more to be dreaded; men can inflict on others punishments which are of short duration, and there is a limit to the pain which a man may endure. But God's punishment is everlasting, and the greatness of the pains which He can inflict is unlimited. When God grows tired of man's impudence, and the measure of his sins is filled, He flings him into the abyss of hell. We are told to fear Him who has the power of sending a soul to hell, for that is a dreadful affliction. Let us make a serious meditation on this, that to offend almighty God is a diabolical act of audacity.

Not only do we offend and insult a good God when we commit a sin, but we sign ourselves over to the slavery of the devil, who comes to our soul and deprives it of all that is ad-

mirable; makes her a miserable, poor, despicable object, and takes away all her right to heaven. All the merits and good deeds are destroyed by a sin, the confessions, the holy communions, the works of charity, all are gone, and we stand before God without anything to recommend us. Suppose a gardener planted valuable fruit trees in his garden, and spent on them much time and money; they had borne excellent fruit for several years, but one night a heavy frost killed the trees and fruit. What would be the feeling of that man when he entered his garden and saw all the fruit lying on the ground, and the leaves of the trees black and blighted? He would be sorry enough to burst into tears and certainly into lamentations.

Sin has done you more harm than this blighting frost. Has it not deprived you of that precious fruit which you are caring for so tenderly to bring to maturity, in order that you may by means of it gain heaven? The trees of virtue that bore such noble fruit have been ruthlessly torn up; what dreadful ruin, what chaos does not sin produce in the soul? Is it possible that a person can think lightly of such a misfortune? People may live months and years in those sins, and never think of the terrible state they are in. They do not see the condition of the soul, and consequently it gives them little concern. Father Segneri says, "If every time a person blasphemed, God would have his tongue swollen to such a degree that it would fill his mouth; if at every theft the hands would lose their power; if after an immodest act the whole body would be covered with a leprosy, think ye, there would be so many in this world addicted to such sin?" But since the damage is done to the soul, we do not consider it very much.

Now, my dear young people, if you are in sin, are you going to remain so during these penitential days? Think with sorrow of your sins, and labor to eradicate them from your heart. Make a sincere, straightforward confession at Easter, and approach the table of the Lamb of God. Be not

obstinate as so many are who cannot appreciate anything religious.

Our Lord did all that lay in His power to make the Jews understand that He was really the Messias; it was not for want of proof, or for the want of the grace, but instead of believing they only blasphemed Him, and said He was possessed by the devil.

This seems to be the picture of the world at the present time. Our Lord wants to illuminate the hearts and intellects of sinners, but they wish to remain in their ignorance. He wants to soften their hearts, but they will not let Him: it is not therefore through want of intellect nor of proof nor of the grace of God that these people will not change; it would almost require the miracle of a new creation to put other hearts in them. And He will not destroy our liberty, for human liberty is precious even to almighty God. What must be the feelings of those wretched parents who are so unhappy as to have wicked sons or daughters? When they advise their children to go to confession and Mass, to become respectable Christians, they receive a flat refusal, perhaps even an insult. I do not suppose that any of you have come to such an extreme; but we must all fear the first steps in sin. The first is never made alone, there come other steps afterward. Sin is like fire set to a house, the more it spreads the more it increases in heat and fury. Of course it is an old and trite saying, that a great fire may spring from a spark, which you could at one time have extinguished by setting your foot on it. I am intimately acquainted with a young man of my parish who in his youth was a charming example of innocence and happiness; he was much with me, and I enjoyed his boyish companionship very much. In course of time he became estranged, and I knew he had lost his innocence. I spoke to him, but all friendship was gone; he hated me, and avoided me as if I had done him some great wrong. Be on your guard, and let not sin into your heart; it is too horrible a thing to become familiar with. If you hate sin truly, and

you really hear the voice of Jesus, open your heart to Him, and He will make you happy at Easter, and in fact at every one of your communions. Our Lord is happy to come to your soul; He will love everything in your simple dwelling as long as it is not sin; He will be pleased with the little sacrifices, the smallest preparations; He will see that you have a good will. He will not disdain your humble attempts at virtue. The mother who teaches the babe to talk says foolish words and repeats them over and over; she is teaching the child. Then prepare your heart for the coming of Our Lord at Easter, and He will truly say to you also, "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." What an intimacy between Jesus and the soul! Who could refuse that loving friendship? With all my heart, O Jesus! I cry to Thee, "Yes, come, O divine Jesus; come to my soul!"

PALM SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to **Matt. xxvi. and xxvii.** *At that time:* Jesus said to his disciples: You know that after two days shall be the Pasch, and the Son of man shall be delivered up to be crucified. Then were gathered together the chief priests and ancients of the people into the court of the high-priest, who was called Caiphas: and they consulted together, that by subtilty they might apprehend Jesus and put him to death. But they said: Not on the festival day, lest perhaps there should be a tumult among the people. And when Jesus was in Bethania, in the house of Simon the leper, there came to him a woman having an alabaster box of precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he was at table. And the disciples seeing it, had indignation, saying: To what purpose is this waste? for this might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. And Jesus knowing it, said to them: Why do you trouble this woman? For she hath wrought a good work upon me. For the poor you have always with you: but me you have not always. For she, in pouring this ointment upon my body, hath done it for my burial. Amen, I say to you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done, shall be told for a memory of her. Then went one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, to the chief priests. And said to them:

What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? But they appointed him thirty pieces of silver. And from thenceforth he sought opportunity to betray him. And on the first day of the Azymes the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Pasch? But Jesus said: Go ye into the city to a certain man, and say to him: The master saith: My time is near at hand, with thee I make the Pasch with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed to them, and they prepared the Pasch. But when it was evening, he sat down with his twelve disciples. And whilst they were eating, he said: Amen I say to you, that one of you is about to betray me. And they being very much troubled, began every one to say: Is it I, Lord? But he answering said: He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, he shall betray me. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but wo to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed: it were better for him if that man had not been born. And Judas that betrayed him, answering said: Is it I, Rabbi? He saith to him: Thou hast said it. And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat: this is my body. And taking the chalice he gave thanks; and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins. And I say to you I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father. And a hymn being said, they went out unto mount Olivet. Then Jesus saith to them: All you shall be scandalized in me this night. For it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed. But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. And Peter answering, said to him: Although all shall be scandalized in thee, I will never be scandalized. Jesus said to him: Amen I say to thee, that in this night before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice. Peter saith to him: Yea, though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee. And in like manner said all the disciples. Then Jesus came with them into a country place which is called Gethsemani, and he said to his disciples: Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray. And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. Then he saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay you here and watch with me. And going a little further, he fell upon his face, praying, and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh to his disciples:

and findeth them asleep, and he saith to Peter: What! could you not watch one hour with me? Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak. Again the second time he went and prayed, saying: My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done. And he cometh again, and findeth them sleeping: for their eyes were heavy. And leaving them, he went again: and he prayed the third time, saying the self-same word. Then he cometh to his disciples and saith to them: Sleep ye now and take your rest: behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go: behold he is at hand that will betray me. As he yet spoke, behold Judas, one of the twelve came, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the ancients of the people. And he that betrayed him, gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he, hold him fast. And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said: Hail, Rabbi. And he kissed him. And Jesus said to him: Friend, whereto art thou come? Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus, and held him. And behold one of them, that were with Jesus, stretching forth his hand, drew out his sword, and striking the servant of the high-priest, cut off his ear. Then Jesus saith to him: Put up again thy sword into its place: For all that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot ask my Father, and he will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels? How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that so it must be done? In that same hour Jesus said to the multitudes: You are come out as it were to a robber with swords and clubs to apprehend me. I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and you laid not hands on me. Now all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then the disciples all leaving him, fled. But they holding Jesus led him to Caiphas the high-priest, where the scribes and the ancients were assembled. And Peter followed him afar off, even to the court of the high-priest. And going in, he sat with the servants, that he might see the end. And the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death: and they found not, whereas many false witnesses had come in. And last of all there came two false witnesses, and they said: This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and after three days to rebuild it. And the high-priest rising up, said to him: Answereth thou nothing to the things which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high-priest said to him: I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the

Christ the Son of God. Jesus saith to him: Thou hast said it; nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high-priest rent his garments, saying: He hath blasphemed: what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, how you have heard the blasphemy; what think you? But they answering said: He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffet him, and others struck his face with the palms of their hands, saying: Prophesy unto us, O Christ; who is he that struck thee? But Peter sat without in the court: and there came to him a servant maid, saying: Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean. But he denied before them all, saying: I know not what thou sayest. And as he went out of the gate another maid saw him, and she saith to them that were there: This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath: That I know not the man. And after a little while they came that stood by, and said to Peter: Surely thou also art one of them: for even thy speech doth discover thee. Then he began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus which he had said: Before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice. And going forth he wept bitterly. And when morning was come, all the chief priests and ancients of the people took counsel against Jesus, that they might put him to death. And they brought him bound, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas who betrayed him seeing that he was condemned, repenting himself, brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and ancients, saying: I have sinned in betraying innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? Look thou to it. And casting down the pieces of silver in the temple he departed: and went and hanged himself with an halter. But the chief priests having taken the pieces of silver, said: It is not lawful to put them into the corbona, because it is the price of blood. And after they had consulted together, they bought with them the potter's field to be a burying-place for strangers. For this cause that field was called Haceldama, that is, the field of blood, even to this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the prophet, saying: And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was prized, whom they prized of the children of Israel: and they gave them unto the potter's field, as the Lord appointed to me. And Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, saying: Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus saith to him: Thou sayest it. And when he was accused by the chief priests and ancients, he answered nothing. Then

Pilate saith to him: Dost not thou hear how great testimonies they allege against thee? And he answered him to never a word: so that the governor wondered exceedingly. Now upon the solemn day the governor was accustomed to release to the people one prisoner, whom they would; and he had then a notorious prisoner that was called Barabbas. They therefore being gathered together, Pilate said: Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. And as he was sitting in the place of judgment his wife sent to him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and ancients persuaded the people that they should ask Barabbas, and make Jesus away. And the governor answering, said to them: Whether will you of the two to be released unto you? But they said, Barabbas. Pilate saith to them: What shall I do then with Jesus that is called Christ? They say all: Let him be crucified. The governor said to them: Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying: Let him be crucified. And Pilate seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made: taking water, washed his hands before the people, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look you to it. And the whole people answering, said: His blood be upon us and upon our children. Then he released to them Barabbas: and having scourged Jesus, delivered him unto them to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto him the whole band: and stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him. And platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail, king of the Jews. And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head. And after they had mocked him, they took off the cloak from him and put on him his own garments, and led him away to crucify him. And going out they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon: him they forced to take up his cross. And they came to the place which is called Golgotha, which is the place of Calvary. And they gave him wine to drink mingled with gall. And when he had tasted, he would not drink. And after they had crucified him, they divided his garments; casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: They divided my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots. And they sat and watched him. And they put over his head his cause, written: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were crucified with him two thieves: one on the right hand, and one on the

left. And they that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads, and saying: Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it: save thy own self: if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests with the scribes and ancients mocking, said: He saved others, himself he cannot save: if he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God: let him now deliver him if he will have him: for he said: I am the Son of God. And the self-same thing the thieves also, that were crucified with him, reproached him with. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth, until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani? that is, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some that stood there and heard, said: This man calleth Elias. And immediately one of them running took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. And the others said: Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to deliver him. And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were rent. And the graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints that had slept, arose, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, came into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: Indeed this was the Son of God. And there were many women afar off, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. And when it was evening, there came a certain rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph; who also himself was a disciple of Jesus; he went to Pilate and asked the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded that the body should be delivered. And Joseph taking the body, wrapped it up in a clean linen cloth; and laid it in his own new monument, which he had hewed out in a rock. And he rolled a great stone to the door of the monument and went his way. And there was there Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre. And the next day, which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying: Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said, while he was yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command therefore the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day: lest perhaps his disciples come and steal him away, and say to the

people: He is risen from the dead: and the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said to them: You have a guard: go guard it as you know. And they departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting guards.

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

Splendid was the triumphal entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem. Among that crowd of people who welcomed Our Lord, there were a large number of children of the Jews, attracted no doubt by the enthusiasm of their parents. These young ones were, if possible, even more enthusiastic than their elders. Their cries were encouraged, and Our Lord rebuked those who would dampen their youthful ardor in any way. We might know from this, my dear children, that it is not out of place to be glad, and even when the proper time comes, to be noisy at play.

But this is a holy time—let us not be distracted by noise. Let us rather turn our thoughts to the Passion of Our Lord. The Church puts on deep and dark purple to show that she is doing penance.

Magnificent, therefore, was the entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem; loud acclamations accompanied Him. They would have made Him king on other occasions, but He went away and hid Himself, declining all such honors. This day, however, the whole multitude is carried away with joy; they pay Him royal homage and He allows it. Where are now the enemies of Christ? They have hid on this day, and dare not make their appearance; when they do they are quickly silenced by Our Lord Himself, who assures us that if the old and young, and especially the young, were hindered from giving vent to their jubilation, even the stones on the roadside would cry out. Branches of trees are cut down and are borne in the hands of the people. Smaller greens are strewn on the way, and a perfect carpet is made of the people's cloaks spread on the roads over which Jesus is to pass.

This was the celebration of the first Palm Sunday, my dear children. Palms are now publicly blessed in the church; a procession of altar boys goes through the aisles bearing palm leaves, and everybody carries palms home to their houses to keep them because they are blessed.

Soon, however, the scene will change. Soon this enthusiasm will die out, and the enemies of Jesus will show themselves again. Those who cried out the loudest are now astonished at their boldness, and they ask themselves to what it will lead. Then they are told that reparation must be made; this dangerous man must be got out of the way; He must die to destroy His pretensions to royalty. Our Lord is shocked most of all by the instability of human affection, the ingratitude, the desertion of Him, the treachery of His friends. Yes, my dear children, one thing we must resolve, and that is, to be strong in our faith and faithful unto death to our divine Master. When you are preparing for confession or communion you are in earnest in your promises to Jesus, but soon the humor changes; you grow cold again; you become careless in your prayers and fall into sin. One day you cry out: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord!" But soon you change your mind, and think the friendship of Jesus is too tyrannical; it exacts too much of you and you join the multitude of the wicked who mutter: "This Jesus subverts the heart of the people. We have no king but Cæsar, the world, and our passions. Away with Him to the cross."

Our Lord in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem was a real king—a real God. He held His enemies down by the power of His omnipotence. There is a lesson of confidence in this providence of God. Dear children, the Church has often been persecuted. Men have been ashamed of her; they have fought against her, and strong enemies they were too—stronger than the Church in a worldly sense. It has often been predicted that the Church would come to ruin. You may have noticed these persecutions yourselves, dear chil-

dren, in reading history. We have at least read of the powerful enemies against the infant Church; the persecuting Jews; the Romans who martyred hundreds of thousands. I conceive from this the firm conviction that the Church will stand forever. Remember that you belong to the true Church, which is constantly under the providence of God. Be faithful to her all your lives; be not cowards who will desert her under the most trivial temptation. O ye of little faith! why do ye doubt? How easily our young men are seen to fall away, if not by changing their faith, by becoming careless in the practice of it.

Our Lord enters Jerusalem, humble, kind, peaceful, sitting on an ass led by the Apostles, love depicted on His countenance. In former times, in the East especially, when a triumphal entry was made into a city, there was a great pageant. Great quantities of captured arms were conveyed in carts; banners taken from the enemy were displayed; vessels of gold and silver were tastefully carried, but especially poor captives bound with chains hand and foot were cruelly dragged along to be put to death after the festivities were over on that day of their humiliation. Not so on the day of the triumph of Our Lord. His was rather a spiritual exultation than a triumph of the world. Our Lord is peaceful and good; He could crush His enemies at any time, but He prefers to be patient and wait for their conversion. Even after they have done Him the greatest injury He does not strike them; He is ever meek and humble.

This character, you, my dear children, ought to endeavor to gain early in life. Children are prone to hasty anger and to little spitefulnesses; some have violent tempers, and in their blind rage would commit any injury, even to their friends.

Kindness and goodness of heart are most beautiful characteristics in young people; docility is the most winning quality in a child's disposition. Jesus is your king and master; follow Him in the practice of virtue, and according to

this day's Gospel make His meekness a special lesson to be learned and imitated.

EASTER SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *Mark* xvi. 1-7. *At that time:* Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen. And they said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking, they saw the stone rolled back: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe: and they were astonished. Who saith to them: Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he is risen, he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there you shall see him, as he told you.

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD.

No longer are there tears in our eyes; no longer are heard wailings of grief, but hymns of the greatest joy. Our Lord is risen. Jesus, the good God, is risen glorious and triumphant from the tomb. Let us rejoice! Let those tremble and despair who are His enemies! The Jews bragged of the success of their execrable work; but their triumph is short. They did not see that all this happened to Our Lord, because He desired it so. They triumphed for a while, when they had shut up His body in the tomb, but Christ, full of life and immortal, now passes through the stone vault and is truly risen. He is indeed risen and endowed with greater beauty; clothed in light, like that of the sun; the crown of thorns is changed into a beautiful diadem, the wounds into signs of victory; the blasphemies of the Jews into the exultation of the angels; His sorrowful death into a most happy life. O day of happiness for the whole earth! "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us exult and rejoice

therein." What fruit shall we draw from this feast? It is this: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead to die no more; so also when we rise from our death of sin, we should die no more, but continue in the life of grace.

It is a fact that many rise from the sleep of death during these days of the paschal joy; because the Church has made an express law that every Catholic must go to confession and communion at Easter. Therefore many, obedient to the law, confess, bewail their sins and promise to remain faithful to the graces of a new life. Many, however, are not steadfast; a few days have scarcely passed before they forget, and by sin fall back again into death. Have such really risen? It appeared as if they had, but if they had been really converted they would certainly not have fallen back into sin so easily and in so short a time.

I should like to believe that all you, my dear young friends, who have gone to confession, have really made up your minds not to fall into sin again. Just think what a terrible thing it is to be in the state of moral death; by sin you become an enemy of God and you cease to be the brother of Jesus Christ. The character of the soul is goodness; and so beautiful is it that God loves it and takes special delight in it. You are by Baptism brothers of Jesus Christ, associates of the angels, of the Blessed Virgin and the saints in heaven. It is worth your while, then, my dear young people, to preserve with the greatest care the purity which you have again acquired by the use of the sacraments. Unhappy beings, if you become bad again, you are throwing away your last chance of salvation; it is very hard to rise from the state of sin to life; the devil will make every effort to hold on to you; he will redouble his watchfulness, will strengthen his net about you, will double the chains that already bind you. He will send his servants to you, who will surround you in such a manner that nothing good can come near you. He will make the life of a sinner seem most delightful, so that in your blindness you would not change it if you could. That

is the great difficulty—that we are our own obstacles. We would not love God if we could, we would not serve Him if we could—such are the machinations of the devil to keep you in his service. So you see it is not as easy as you think to return to God. Without grace we can do nothing, and we cannot run to Him and stay away from Him at will. When God has seen you unfaithful to Him several times, after having been saved by His mercy, He will no longer give you those extraordinary graces which brought you out of your evil ways heretofore; now He will let you go, He will abandon you as a thoroughly worthless subject. From these considerations you can gather that it is most important for us to be in the state of grace, for on it our salvation depends. It is also very essential never to think lightly of the state of grace, not to let it go and come as we often do in the Sacrament of Penance; we return again and again to confession accusing ourselves of the same sins, and thus we continue until the day of our death. When once we have risen as Christ has risen, to die no more, we also must begin a new life. If in the past we have been so fond of the world that we thought of nothing else, now in our new life we must live with Jesus Christ; we will renounce the world to flee from those unlawful pleasures, to lead a celestial life, to be in heaven rather than upon this earth. "If you have risen with Christ, relish the things of heaven, not the things of earth." Do not run after the pleasures of this world with such a relish; look for the joys of heaven, pray to God, use the sacraments frequently, and hear the word of God; then this new life will also be a resurrection for you, a glorious day; and will foreshadow the day on which you will be crowned with the crown of perseverance.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

GOSPEL. *John* xx. 19-31. *At that time,* when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them: Peace be to you. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands, and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him: We have seen the Lord. But he said to them: Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within: and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said: Peace be to you. Then he saith to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless but believing. Thomas answered and said to him: My Lord, and my God. Jesus saith to him: Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed. Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God: and that believing you may have life in his name.

THE VISIT OF OUR LORD TO HIS DISCIPLES—THE UNBELIEVING THOMAS.

THE Apostles were gathered in an upper room, away from interference, for fear of the Jews; there they discussed the events of the last days in the life of their Master, and the appearance He deigned to make to Mary Magdalene. In the evening while they were at supper, Our Lord appeared in the flesh, though the doors were securely locked. The place

shone brightly with His presence, and in a reassuring tone He said to them, "Peace be with you," and showed them the wounds of His hands and feet. The disciples were happy, and again He said to them, "Peace be with you."

My dear young people, you all love peace and are looking for it. Where is it likely to be found? You look for it in most unlikely places; you find strife, deception, and sorrow. Sometimes you look for peace in the enjoyment of pleasures, in the diversions of the world; you deck yourselves with roses; you say, "Let not this opportune time pass by; let us crown ourselves with roses before they fade." But you find no peace; there is always a great vacuum which cannot be filled. The pleasures you have enjoyed have passed too quickly; they have often left a bitter remembrance, and the riches of the world give no contentment. Consider the great and wise Solomon, king of the Jews; according to his own admission, he sought and enjoyed every pleasure; he had a grand throne, great riches, his table was laden with costly food, and he had innumerable servants. There was no kingdom equal to his in splendor and wealth. Of all men Solomon should have been the happiest—and yet he was not happy; the more he possessed, the more he was disgusted with the insignificance of these things; he saw in it nothing but vanity and affliction of spirit. Why was Solomon obliged to confess, that amid all his riches, his honors, and his power, he met with no satisfaction, no peace, but felt disappointed? It was this: our hearts are made for God and to enjoy the pleasures of heaven; for that reason the enjoyments of this world can never satisfy us, or give us peace.

My dear young people, try to realize this in the beginning of your days. The things of this world look very attractive and promising in our youth, but years will open our eyes to the true state of things. Be not deceived, but begin by giving everything its proper value; love God alone, and that will give you peace, contentment, and happiness.

It is certainly a lamentable fact that sin becomes the great

source of enjoyment to many of our young people. So blind and wayward are they, that although they know that sin begets nothing but misery and disgust, they still live on in that sad state. They eat the bread of iniquity and drink the wine of sin. Stronger and stronger grows the fierce fever of passion the more it is indulged, until it can be compared to nothing but a tempestuous, angry sea, threatening with destruction everything that is found in its way.

Oh, blessed days of innocence, when you had not tasted the seductive poison of sin! When a little lie, or a disobedience to your parents, gave you terrible disquiet of conscience. In those happy days you sat content at the frugal table, you loved your home and passed the evening in the bosom of your family. Then you had no idea what bitterness of heart or a disquiet mind meant; but there came a time when for the first time you said, "Jesus, I will serve Thee no more." From that moment you felt the stings of conscience. You were like the fratricide Cain, who restlessly wandered about, afraid that every man was his mortal enemy. The rivers threatened to drown him, the hills to fall on him, the valleys to bury him alive. He had the dreadful thought in his mind that those who found him would kill him.

Would that we could realize the fact that to know God and to love Him is the only source of peace! Thomas à Kempis says, "That God, the eternal and infinite, who fills all things, is the real comfort of the soul and the real joy of the heart." Give testimony to that which you have experienced during these days of the paschal feast. You have made your peace with God by means of a good confession—tell me, did you not feel a heavenly joy in your soul when the priest raised his hands to give you absolution? Did you not feel as if new life had been infused into your body and soul? And you, my dear young people, who have had the grace of partaking for the first time of the Bread of angels: did you ever experience such happiness; did you ever feel greater consolation? What a difference there is between

serving the good God and serving that cruel monster, the devil! If you have as yet never felt the consolation of serving God, now is the time to make a small effort, and God will reward you with a peace the world cannot give. When the first Napoleon was congratulated on a certain great victory he had gained, and his friends told him it was the most glorious day of his life, he said, "No, the most happy day of my life was the day of my first communion."

After Our Lord had twice saluted the Apostles with "Peace be with you," He breathed on them saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Impress these words on your memory, for they are the proof of the divine institution of confession. God gave His disciples and their successors the power of forgiving sins. What a great benefit did Our Lord bestow on mankind by this act! He saw that many who had been regenerated by the waters of Baptism would again fall into sin. He gave us this sacrament as a plank thrown to us after shipwreck. You cannot deny, however, that this divine gift is often abused. Some have the temerity to say, "We will commit this sin, and then confess it and it will be forgiven." Never load your souls with such a sin of presumption. Use that great grace for your salvation and not for your damnation.

When Our Lord visited the Apostles on this occasion, Thomas was not with them. When he came in they gathered about him, relating the occurrence, "We have seen the Lord," spoken to Him, and touched Him. Thomas answered, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." What an exhibition of human weakness! What incredulity, what obstinacy in following out his own views and despising the united testimony of the other ten! What presumption to lay down the law of evidence to Our Lord! Well it was that he had a master so full of love. Eight days afterwards Our Lord appeared again,

the doors being shut, and this time Thomas was with them. The Lord had come especially to convince Thomas. Calling him He said, "Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." So struck was Thomas by the goodness of the Master, so overcome with sorrow for his fault, that he fell down before Our Lord and cried out, "My Lord and my God." The Lord then said, "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen and have believed."

There are many Thomases among us Christians, and even more incredulous than Thomas, who say, "Unless I see I will not believe." For example they do not understand certain doctrines of the Church; they deny them and are half infidels. A day will come, and perhaps it is not far distant, when they will have to acknowledge the truth of those doctrines; and severe punishments will be dealt out to them for their wickedness and impiety; they are so unbelieving, that if Christ were to appear again before them, they would maintain that it was not He.

My dear young people, do not choose such as these for your companions; avoid the conversation of those who do not respect religion; be careful of the books you read. The writings of our present day are full of infidelity. The best Protestant and infidel writers make most ridiculous charges against the holy faith. Doubts are raised concerning fasts; modern scientific discoveries are so distorted that they must needs throw discredit on religion. The young are especially entrapped by this apparent show of reason. Avoid such books, that you may not be affected by their teachings. You must not say that you ought to know the objections to our religion. If you study enough, and can refute them, well and good; but if your knowledge is insufficient you will lose your faith. St. Aloysius Gonzaga, when a child, had a certain book and tried to find out what it was. He could decipher enough to see that it was against religion, so he threw it into the

fire and ran to wash his hands, because they had touched such a blasphemous work.

In matters of faith, drive away with great care every temptation; renew every day your promises of fidelity; tell God that with His grace you will be His constant follower and ask Him to enlighten and strengthen your faith.

You may be sure that there is a great foundation of truth in your religion; that good and wise men have taught and believed it, such as St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and many others who have been the glory of the Catholic Church.

Blessed is he that shall have preserved his faith, for it is a precious gift. One day you will see the truths plainly revealed, though now some things may strike you as not in accordance with what the world believes. You will be glad at the hour of your death, when you will have the consolation to be comforted by that religion which you have professed in your lifetime. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

GOSPEL. *John* x. 11-16. *At that time Jesus said to the Pharisees:* I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and flieth: and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep: and the hireling flieth, because he is a hireling, and he hath no care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd: and I know mine, and mine know me. As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for my sheep. And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"I AM the Good Shepherd." This Our Lord says of Himself. Our Lord had other titles, as Jesus, Saviour, Redeemer,

Master, Advocate, King of peace, Our Reconciliation, all signifying His love for mankind. Are you, my dear young people, glad of the title of good Shepherd, which Our Lord gives Himself? Yes, the title is a beautiful one; it is full of consolation and of love. He gives Himself this title in order to gain our affection and our entire heart. How good Jesus is to us, His lambs and sheep!—What care does He not take of us? He speaks to our hearts words of eternal life, and His holy inspiration illumines our mind and makes us know His goodness. He takes us up tenderly, and brings us to delightful pastures. He nourishes our souls with His holy word, by the words of His priests; He feeds us with bread which is not of this world, the Bread of angels, His sacred body and blood. Was there ever a shepherd who gave his body and blood for food to his flock? Generally the flock is a source of revenue, support, and sustenance to the shepherd; but not so in the case of this Good Shepherd. He supports and sustains His flock.

Of course the shepherd will fight for his flock, he will use every means in his power to protect it from ravage, but the Good Shepherd gives His life for His flock. O, infinite love! What pains and suffering didst Thou not endure for Thy sheep! Just think of Jesus crucified; look at Him nailed to the cross; see that face all covered with bruises; those eyes half closed with blood; those shoulders torn by stripes; that side opened by a lance; those hands and feet pierced with nails, and that head crowned with sharp thorns. All this, all these wounds, the Good Shepherd suffered for His poor lost sheep. Then what should we do on our part? Oh, give Him at least a little recognition, gratitude, obedience, and love—if nothing more than to receive Him on the great festivals of the year. This good Shepherd will love you with all affection and give you His choicest blessings.

There are, on the contrary, many restless, ill-regulated, sickly, plague-stricken sheep who have to be thrown out of the flock, because they continually disobey Him and make

Him feel the sadness of having shown kindness in vain. He would like to bring them to good pastures that they might recover from their maladies, and become useful members of the flock again, but they will not listen to His voice. He calls them to the use of the sacraments, but it is in vain; He calls them about Him to be His escort and companions, but they would rather be far away from Him; they want to feed their souls on poisonous food; they do not like the restraint of being near the holy Jesus. They have left the fountains of living water which ran to eternal life. They have looked for water and found filthy broken cisterns.

Among you, my dear youthful friends, there are many wayward sheep also. This Good Shepherd seeks to bring them back to the fold, but many are obstinate, blind, and wicked, and will not hear His voice. He invites them with sweet and coaxing words; He makes them feel the qualms of conscience; He embitters the cup of vice from which they are drinking and takes peace and happiness away from them. But these wicked sheep will not listen and continually say by their works, "No, I will have nothing to do with you." What more should this Good Shepherd do to gain them and to bring them back to His flock? Can you suggest something? Is it possible that God will not succeed in attracting them to Him? Will He not succeed when He promises them the kingdom of paradise? He must and will get angry some time; He will abandon them and deny them the help of His grace, and then they will fall from one sin to another. How many young people, my dear friends, are in such a state. In early youth they become vessels of wrath, and if God still tolerates them, the day of vengeance will come, the day on which God will separate the bad from the good. And to the bad He will say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

Now, there is still time to change your way of living; you can become the well-loved lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ, instead of being the despised rams that the Shepherd

does not tolerate near Him. Go to Him and show your sorrow, and He will take you on His shoulders, for He is waiting and looking for you. He is watching you in your wanderings, and at the first sign of repentance, of weakness, or of fainting, He hastens to your side, He raises you on His shoulders, and carries you back to the fold which you would not have been able to reach with your wasted strength.

My young friends, we are all sheep of the flock of Christ; we are His by redemption and by the grace of almighty God. Be always obedient to Him, hear His voice, and walk continually in His footsteps. Would you walk securely in the midst of this world, so full of danger and snares? The only means is to allow yourselves to be guided by God. If you would please the divine Shepherd, imitate Him in His divine virtues, in His kindness and obedience, like good sheep who are willing to be led. The divine Shepherd having loved His flock on this earth, will call them all to the enjoyment of heavenly pastures and will quench their thirst "At the torrents of joy" which He provides for us in heaven.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Gospel. *John* xvi. 16-22. *At that time Jesus said to his disciples:* A little while, and now you shall not see me: and again a little while, and you shall see me: because I go to the Father. Then some of his disciples said one to another: What is this that he saith to us: A little while, and you shall not see me: and again a little while, and you shall see me, and because I go to the Father? They said therefore: What is this that he saith, a little while? we know not what he speaketh. And Jesus knew that they had a mind to ask him, and he said to them: Of this do you inquire among yourselves, because I said: A little while, and you shall not see me: and again a little while, and you shall see me? Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world. So also you now indeed have

sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice: and your joy no man shall take from you.

JESUS CONSOLES HIS DISCIPLES AT HIS DEPARTURE FROM THIS WORLD.

Our Lord was about to leave this world. The Apostles had received a terrible shock at His disgraceful death, and here was another cause of great grief. When Our Lord was crucified, they were scattered like a flock of frightened sheep, and when they came a little to their senses, they met in an upper room, where no one would look for them. What dreadful news is this He is telling them? "I am going to the Father, and you will see Me no longer." The world rejoiced when Our Lord was crucified, and at His going away it felt no sorrow. This same thing happens also to the followers of Christ in our time; for a little while they are in great trouble and affliction, as is always the case with every good life in this world. Show me a good man who does not worry and fret over the duties he has to perform, in order to do them well and to the greater glory of God. Soon, however, this sorrow is turned into joy; not only after death, but even in this life, there is many a foretaste of heaven for the good. The wicked try to have a good time in this world; they laugh a great deal, and enjoy everything, but at the end of life this joy becomes a fearful regret. They know that hell is waiting for them. In this life, too, they have hours of unhappiness and despair. Day and night they sin and are happy; their joy may last a few days or a few years, but the day comes when they have to leave this world with all its attachments. You remember that rich man of the Gospel, who had accumulated a great deal of wealth, whose strong boxes were full of money, whose extensive fields yielded a large income; he could not get rid of all, in fact he thought of building storehouses on a larger scale. "My soul, you have many goods; no danger of want, the gold is

there in the safe, and can be used at any moment." What plans he made! He would travel from land to land, he would enjoy ocean voyages, he would get the best of everything, but in his heart he heard a voice whispering, "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" What startling information that must have been.

The idea often strikes me, though a little vulgar, that rich people are like fattened bulls which are the pride of the farmer; they are carefully tended and carefully fed for some time, but at the end is the slaughter-house. Certainly they are not to be envied. Neither, then, should good people who suffer envy the rich, who are in luck and are happy. It is hard to listen to this, because we have to be persuaded of a thing that human nature does not like. We have a horror of trouble and misfortune, and would put down as crazy any one who would tell us that misfortunes are a happiness. But the life of a sinner is not all sunshine; on the contrary what he thinks happiness is merely the ravings of a drunkard. It is true that there is a certain satisfaction in committing sin, but as soon as this is over, for it is only momentary, we feel a terrible disappointment, because it cannot be enjoyed longer. Yes, the happiness of the sinner is very short, it is frequently false and delusive. His smile hides a most saddened heart; at least it hides a conscience that is continually upbraiding the heart. He hears a voice that tells him heaven is not for men like him.

A certain criminal in Egypt was banished to an island for his crimes. Somehow he there began to realize his wickedness and a terrible fear overcame him; he used to think his throat would be cut in his sleep; then he would jump up, and, rushing out into the starry night, stand there looking at the brilliant heaven, and cry, "Yes, there is a God." He would recall all his crimes, and at last in fury would exclaim, "Yes, I know that I shall have to be punished for them." It is true, then, that the wicked do not have all their days

bright and happy, and it is good that it should be so. Our Lord afflicts them purposely, strikes them hard while they are in the height of their enjoyment, so that they sometimes come to their senses, and are converted. When the prodigal son was in great distress, he thought of going home to his father's house. Affliction makes the wicked turn to God, and it is a blessed thing that these visitations are sent them for their eternal welfare. O, my good children! would that God might lay His hands heavily on many young people who have gone astray, in order that they might be reminded of their first instructions. .It looks cruel to wish anybody trouble, but to pray to God that a sickness may prove to be a spiritual benefit to the sinner would not be bad, since it is sometimes the only way to correct evil habits.

Have pity on your souls, my dear youthful friends; be not of that unhappy number who repay God's goodness with black ingratitude. Remember that even were you rich, and gifted with the brightest intellect, if you are in sin you are the most miserable of human beings, you are servants of the devil. What will it profit you if you are rich in money, but poor in the grace and friendship of God? On the other hand, if you are in God's grace, even though you were a poor beggar, you would not deserve to be called unhappy, because the sufferings which God sends the just are disguised favors. St. Paul tells us this when he says, "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations."

My dear young people, if you are in sorrow repine not, but accept the trials with a holy resignation, remembering that they are sent you by a good Father, who sometimes chastises His beloved to make them more perfect.

The story of Tobias in the Old Testament will illustrate this point. This old man was very dear to God; he practised many acts of charity toward his fellow captives; he saved from his own table all that he could to give to the hungry; he deprived himself of sleep, that in the dead of night he might do what was against the law, that is, bury

the dead Hebrews that were slain and left on the roadside. What happened to him? An accident made him blind, and he was reduced to extreme poverty, expressly by God's permission, as the Scripture tells us, because He loved him so much. We may not be able to embrace with joy the evils we meet with in this world, but at least let us suffer with resignation and thank God for them. Yes, let us thank Him for that poverty which we have to endure, because it detaches us from the comforts of this life and raises us to the contemplation and hope of better things. Yes, let us thank God for the infirmities with which He chastises our body, which looks for nothing but satisfaction. He chastises our body in order to make us hate the false pleasures of the senses. Yes, let us thank Him that we are not great men, that we are unknown, that we may seek our glory in God alone and our duty in a hidden way, saying with Job, "As it hath pleased the Lord so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord." Lord, dost Thou wish me to be struck with sickness? be it so: Thy holy name be blessed. Shouldst Thou wish me to be persecuted with injuries and calumnies, blessed be Thy name in all these things. Thou, O God, dost permit the devil to tempt me with many and frequent temptations that give me much trouble; blessed be Thy name. Only give me the grace to be steadfast in virtue, and to resist them effectually. Lord, as long as I remain faithful to Thee, do with me what Thou wilt. If Thou dost want to put me into the light of Thy consolation, or if Thou dost place me in the school of sorrow; if I be in tribulation or in joy, I accept it all in the knowledge that it is Thy holy will; only preserve me from sin and its punishment, hell. If, my good friends, you are so disposed toward the providence of God you will accumulate many treasures of merit for heaven, and your crown will be a magnificent one.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

GOSPEL. *John* xvi. 5-14. *At that time Jesus said to his disciples:* I go to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me: Whither goest thou? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart. But I tell you the truth: it is expedient to you that I go: for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you: but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment; of sin: because they believed not in me. And of justice: because I go to the Father: and you shall see me no longer. And of judgment: because the prince of this world is already judged. I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now. But when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will teach you all truth; for he shall not speak of himself: but what things soever he shall hear, he shall speak, and the things that are to come he shall show you. He shall glorify me: because he shall receive of mine, and shall show it to you.

THE CONSOLATION WHICH CHRIST GAVE THE APOSTLES BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FROM THIS WORLD.

THE disciples are to be pitied for the desolation they felt at the approaching separation from their good Master. He tells them that now He is about to leave the world to go to heaven, there to be united to His heavenly Father. It was a sad thought. They would no longer hear His words; they would no more see His benign countenance. His sacred personality, which went about doing good to all, healing the sick, curing the lame, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead to life, would no longer be of this earth. Had the disciples been more perfect they would not have suffered so much, still their attachment was a sign of their love for Jesus. He did not rebuke this holy affection; on the contrary He left it in their hearts, only calming their fears for the future by holy promises.

My dear young people, do not give way to fretful brooding and moroseness if you have to endure sorrow. You ought to

be happy and cheerful in the Lord, keeping yourselves free from sin. You have often been told that sin is the greatest misfortune in the world, and that this should be the only thing to make us sad. Be cheerful then; this is the lesson I wish to inculcate, the lesson which I have drawn from this day's Gospel.

Ecclesiasticus wishes us always to chase sadness from our heart. St. Anthony, the abbot, used to tell his disciples that the strongest arm to conquer the enemy was cheerfulness of mind and heart which has God always before our eyes. With this light of God's presence, the shadows of sorrow, of trouble and misfortune disappear. St. Francis of Sales, whom they call the sensible and rational saint, tells us that, after sin, there is nothing does more harm to the soul than melancholy, and that we ought to banish it with all our might. St. Philip Neri wanted young people especially to be happy. Young people can always be happy because their bodies are sprightly and full of life, while old people are frequently sad from care and many other reasons. Young people should be encouraged to love life in all its activity and enjoyment, and it is sad indeed to see them morose or overwhelmed with care.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga and St. Stanislaus Kostka were happy, but at the same time greatly mortified; they were never melancholy or morose, they did not avoid the company of their companions; on the contrary, their manner made all about them feel a holy joy; their companions did not avoid them, they were favorites. The saints all were happy and contented, they were unhappy only when they saw sin. When they thought that they could not prevent the loss of so many souls to God, they lamented and wept. I wish you to reflect well on this day's lesson: never be sullen and disagreeable in company, as there is no reason for it, unless you are of a whimsical mind; correct it as soon as possible. A youth who is good and pious, but holds himself apart, and likes to pray and read pious books out of the proper time, does wrong;

he may go to the sacraments, but the joyous laugh of youth is no longer heard, the light foot and the agile form is gone; he likes to walk with old men and become as slow as they. All this is not as it ought to be. Young people ought to be happy among themselves, for if the young see one who is pious and at the same time morose, they think moroseness a necessary consequence of piety, and they hate piety and goodness. My good young people, always show yourselves happy and you will do good. The young man who has true piety is always cheerful and happy, and never seems to have the blues; he does what is right.

There is no doubt that a pious life naturally leads to cheerfulness, and this latter attracts the careless; nothing looks so dark and severe as a holy life. "Serve the Lord in joy." Then may discontent, unhappiness, and sorrow be lodged in the hearts of the wicked as a punishment for their sins, and may happiness be in the hearts of the good.

The disciples were silent at the announcement made by Our Lord. He said to them, "None asks Me, 'Whither goest Thou?'" We, my dear children, know where Our Lord has gone. He has gone to heaven. But we should ask ourselves, "Are we following the divine Redeemer in that way which leads to paradise?" Tell me, do all young people walk in the path that leads there? My heart grows sad when I think that so many do not follow in the footsteps of Our Lord, but from earliest childhood fall into ways that will surely lead them to hell. The prayers and advice of their parents avail nothing: they are obstinate and go on in their sins. Better than any advice is good example. Let the light of your good works so shine among your companions that they may see it and follow it; pray to Mary that your example may be effective in leading others to God.

Then Our Lord told His disciples that it was expedient He should go, and that unless He went, the Paraclete would not come to them. What great love Our Lord had for His Church and for His disciples! For when the Spirit shall come,

"He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment." St. Thomas says he will convince the world of sin, which they must avoid, of justice which they must adopt, of judgment which they must fear continually. Understand, my dear young people, that the only evil which you ought to avoid is sin: understand that you must embrace justice, for it is the scrupulous observance of the law of God. You must fear the judgment of God, and not the decisions of men: you ought, therefore, keep in mind that dreadful day when you and all the world will have to appear before God's throne, there to receive the sentence of approval or condemnation from the mouth of God Himself. On that day you will have to appear before the whole world and make a public confession; there will be no support from friends, parents, or relations; we will have no advocate.

Our Lord tells His disciples that He has still many things to tell them, but that they are not now in a condition to understand them, until the Spirit of truth shall come to enlighten them. My dear young people, what light would the Lord infuse into our minds, what inspirations into our hearts, if we were only in a state to receive them and make use of them. Why live so distracted, with your heart so attached to the things of this world, your mind and thoughts so continually on the pleasures of the world that you neglect the performance of your duties? Why do you chase away the salutary thoughts of eternity, avoiding them as if they were something sad which disturbs you? By such carelessness we render ourselves very unworthy of heavenly favors. Stop it now, once for all, and place no obstacle to the blessings and graces with which Jesus wishes to favor us. By a really fervent life, merit that God may notice you at all times, and give you new graces, and that the Holy Ghost will illumine more and more your mind and heart.

We can learn from the life of St. Catherine of Genoa to correspond to the grace of Our Lord. From her very youth she was always ready to obey the inspirations of God. When

she was young, it is true, she sometimes became cold in the service of Our Lord, but no sooner did she hear the voice of conscience stirred in her by God than she turned to her calling and labored more faithfully. She used to say, "Lord, no more world, no more sins." She had many visions of Our Lord, who came to her instructing and consoling her according to the needs of her soul. Once He appeared to her, inviting her to make with Him a fast of forty days, not touching a thing all that time beside the heavenly bread which she received every day in holy communion. She obeyed with joy, but became so sick that it was thought she was dying. The Blessed Sacrament was carried to her room, and on the third day she was perfectly cured. She had not given much time to study in her youth, but by the help of God she wrote books which, at the present day, astonish the learned and those skilled in spirituality. In short, she corresponded perfectly to the will of God, and thus became a saint.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

GOSPEL. *John* xvi. 23-30. *At that time, Jesus said to his disciples:* Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name: ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in proverbs. The hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but will show you plainly of the Father; in that day you shall ask in my name: and I say not to you, that I will ask the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and I go to the Father. His disciples say to him: Behold now thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb; now we know that thou knowest all things, and thou needest not that any man should ask thee. By this we believe that thou comest forth from God.

THE STRENGTH OF PRAYER.

"AMEN, amen I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have

not asked anything in My name: Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." This was the secret that Our Lord to-day revealed to His disciples, by means of which they might get anything they needed. At the same time Our Lord wished to teach the necessity of praying, in order that the treasures of God's graces may descend on us. That *Amen, amen,* was a real oath that He took, for did He not in another place say that we should not waver, but that our strongest words should be yea, yea, no, no? Our Lord made His language so strong to teach us that God could not do otherwise than fulfil our wishes. He has in reality lost the liberty of refusing. St. Augustine tells us that He really becomes our debtor after a good prayer. My task to-day will be to make us see the necessity of prayer, and how it should be made, in order that it may be acceptable to almighty God, and thus secure for us all that our necessities require. Our Lord tells the Apostles that it is necessary to pray always and never to give it up. Pray that temptation may not enter our heart. He wants us to pray at all times, and He frequently gave us the example. How often do we find that He went to a solitary mountain or desert, and spent whole nights in prayer! At one time He gathered His Apostles about Him and delivered to them a formula of prayer, the *Our Father.* It makes no difference where we pray, for prayer can be heard by almighty God in any place. He knows where we are, and we cannot be hid from Him. We need not use studied words or correct language; Our Lord understands us, and that is all that is required. But while we need no great preparation to appear before God's throne in order to pray, there are, nevertheless, some qualities that our prayers must have in order to be heard. And these qualities are but natural ones; we are making a petition, and a petition humble and simple. The prayer of a soul that humbles itself shall penetrate the clouds. Beside the command to pray and to pray always, our necessities should also force us to have recourse to God, as we know that by prayer we can remedy what is amiss in our condition.

We cannot trust ourselves with good resolutions for one hour in the day. Prayer will remedy that, because prayer gives us the grace of perseverance. On account of the frailty of our human nature, we cannot remain long without falling into sin. It is impossible without the grace of God to continue in doing good; but prayer will give us this steadfastness. Yes, indeed, the fact that we live in so many dangers, surrounded by bitter enemies, should make us careful, and watchful not to be surprised into committing sin. If we want to be victorious, as we ought to be and can be, we must have recourse to prayer. Prayer is the invincible weapon which we can use against all our enemies. You yourselves, my good young people, must have experienced the efficacy of prayer. When you were in some great danger, when you were beset by some great temptation, when some bad companion drew you into sin, when the devil was on the point of robbing you of the grace of God, and depriving you of His friendship, what was it that preserved you? It was prayer. By the exclamation, "Jesus, mercy! Sweet heart of Mary, be my salvation!" you received strength, and understood that you were about to do something wrong. On the contrary, when you did not pray, what happened? You were cowards. The least temptation was fatal to you; you yielded to the slightest demand your passions made upon you. How is it, then, that young and old may lead a life of sanctity and purity even though surrounded by bad example? Whence shall they receive strength to persevere and be the glory of God's house? From nothing but prayer. He who prays will be saved; he who prays will correct himself of all bad habits, and will not fall into sin. The wickedness of the world comes from a want of prayer; this world is the antechamber of hell, but by prayer could be changed into the antechamber of heaven. We are very much inclined to attribute our repeated falls into sin to our weakness. We say the temptations are too strong, and we cannot resist them. But are you not blind as regards the real state of things? You do not pray any more, all prayers

are put aside and you scarce have a pious thought in a week. No wonder! where there is no prayer there is necessarily sin. If at the very onset of temptation you would cry out with the Royal Psalmist, "Lord, open Thy eyes to my need. Lord, hasten to my relief; Lord, allow me not to fall away from grace; just now I would rather die than commit this sin," you would not then fall into sin. When David the prophet was a youth, he recited long prayers, and it made him a saint. St. Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, rose from his couch a hundred times every night to pray.

St. Agatha, virgin and martyr, preserved her innocence by prayer. A cruel tyrant had apprehended her, and determined to put her to death. But she prayed, "Lord Jesus, Lord of all things, Thou seest my heart, and Thou knowest what is my desire; Thou alone art my Spouse and I am entirely Thine. Protect me against this tyrant." The monster consigned her to a bad woman, worse than the devil. In her house she was locked up for a whole month, but she never ceased to recommend herself to her Spouse Jesus Christ, and she triumphed over all temptations; such is the efficacy of prayer.

Prayer, to have these grand effects, should be well made; a prayer badly made is no prayer at all, and God does not listen to it. How do you pray? Generally in a great hurry; no sooner have you begun than you grow tired and wish it finished. You pray with such carelessness that you do not know what you are saying. Will not Our Lord have reason to complain of you as He did of the Jewish people, "This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me"? Would you not, instead of pleasing Jesus, deserve the reproof, "Hitherto you have not asked anything"?

The poor man ought to be our model in saying our prayers. The Holy Ghost also refers us to that picture of the poor beggar: the poor man speaks with supplication, he presents to your view his torn garments, he makes you take notice of his pale, sickly looks, he pours forth his tale of woe with

such eloquence that you are touched with pity; he begs almighty God to shorten your time in purgatory, that you may have a beautiful bed in heaven; he prays to you in consideration of the five wounds of Our Lord and for the sake of the cross; he puts on a very humble appearance, and for all this he expects a few pennies at most from you. Shall we not also put on an humble exterior as well as an humble interior, to ask of God what we need? Let us tell God why we are begging, and He will grant our request. St. Julian prayed so fervently, and used to groan and sigh so loud, that passers-by wondered what trouble he was in. Then he would say, "Do not deceive yourselves, be sure God will not give us heaven if we pray coldly and indifferently. Heaven is worthy of heavy sighs and fervent aspirations."

You must pray with the positive desire that what you ask will be granted, and that you really feel the necessity and want of it. Many pray and are afraid that what they ask will be granted. St. Augustine acknowledged that before his conversion, while he used to pray to be freed from the demands of his passions, he wished that God would delay a little, because he had an evil inclination which he felt he might still enjoy. Many young people pray in this way. They know a thing is wrong, and they know they ought to give it up, and in fact have half made up their minds to do so, but they are afraid that God will take them at their word. St. Augustine says, "I feared you would heal me too soon of the vice of impurity in which I was indulging, and which I would rather keep than have it taken from me."

In prayer we must show our confidence and trust in almighty God. We are all beggars; the poorer we are the more humble we must be, and the more confidence we should have that God will give us all that will make us acceptable to Him. He has to do it if He wants us near Him, as we cannot do it ourselves. We ought to be so importunate and so determined in our demands that no delay would put us off or apparent coolness discourage us. As God puts the knowledge of our

misery into our heart, and at the same time the desire to remedy it, will He not give us the festal garment that is necessary in order to be admitted to the heavenly banquet?

Not only should we pray with confidence, but also with perseverance. Too many Christians fail in this quality of prayer; their necessities seem not sufficiently important, and therefore they drop the subject quickly; we do not persevere in prayer if we act thus. One thought, one request is not all that God wants before He grants our demands; we bid God to hurry to our necessities and if He does not we give Him up, much as the inhabitants of Bethulia did when Holofernes invaded the place; they said, "Now five days more will we wait and pray to God, and see whether relief will come to us; if not we will give ourselves up to the enemy." Our young people especially act in this way; they have no perseverance, they do not believe in waiting. A young man gets into the habit of committing a certain sin, and falls into it frequently; the confessor tells him that he is following a path which will lead him to perdition. He says to him, "My son, do not continue on that road; retrace your steps and recommend yourself often to God and you will succeed." The youth listens to the advice; as long as he prays fervently he is able to resist the temptation of the devil, but after a few days he grows tired or feels too secure, and neglects prayer. No sooner is this carelessness established than the old habit comes back in triumph.

I hope, my dear young people, that you have preserved your baptismal innocence. It is likely that many of you have. If you wish to remain faithful in that happy state, pray without interruption, and then you will receive the grace never to fall into mortal sin; those who, unhappily, have lost their innocence must pray with fervor that they may not remain in that state and be lost for all eternity. Make frequent aspirations to Our Lord, to the Blessed Virgin, and to your patron saint. These prayers will keep you from sin, and if you be in sin they will purify your con-

science. Imitate the angelic youth St. Aloysius Gonzaga. It would be well if you made the devotion of the Six Sundays in preparation for his feast. St. Aloysius frequently hid himself in an obscure corner to pray; when he was a little older he prayed for half an hour in the morning and one or two hours in the evening. He rose in the night and prayed. "The prayer of the just is the key of heaven."

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

GOSPEL. *John* xv. 26, 27; xvi. 1-4. ***At that time, Jesus said to his disciples:*** When the Paraclete cometh whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me: and you shall give testimony, because you are with me from the beginning. These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized. They will put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God. And these things will they do to you, because they have not known the Father nor me. But these things I have told you, that when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.

THE HOLY GHOST.

YOU have heard, my dear young people, that our good Lord and Redeemer promised to-day the coming of the Holy Ghost. He foretold, at the same time, the great persecutions that were to follow His leaving this world: but with the grace of the Holy Ghost His people would be able to overcome all these persecutions, which would redound to their own glory and the spread of the kingdom of God on earth. But why will these persecutions come and the cruelty of the world to the Apostles? They shall be hated, chased from the synagogues, and if one is murdered, it will be considered a benefit to the human race. Such were the persecutions of the Christians, and they have continued to the present day; under the guise of religion the most barbarous cruelties have been prac-

tised. Is not this the reason, too, that we are so antagonistic to those who differ from us, that had we the power we would pour our wrath upon them? Be this as it may, whence comes it that men are so wicked and so cruel as to persecute the pure and holy Church of God? Simply because "they know not Me nor My heavenly Father."

My dear young people, what terrible persecution you will have to endure, not of fire and sword, but for your faith and morals in every-day life. Your faith is continually assailed by the wrong theories of our day. To have no religion, or to be a Protestant, we leave to future discussion. How many young men lose their faith in the early days of manhood! Young, strong, and healthy, they do not see the end of their days, and they wish to throw off all restraint of religion; they do not want to believe; it is too much to ask them to make an act of adherence to the Catholic faith.

Many a man's religion is spoiled in his young days; he seems to have no mind for it, and who knows whether he will ever get the grace of God again to take up that which he throws away. Yes, my dear young people, you give your pastors, your parents, and all who are interested in you, great concern for your future. You will have to undergo many temptations, too, from the flesh, which you carry about you; from the devil, who is everywhere watching to find an opportunity to destroy you; from the world, in which all sorts of evil abound, but you are weak and inexperienced in the midst of this great trial.

But you must strengthen yourselves by the thought that the same Spirit of fortitude and wisdom who came upon the Apostles will also descend on you, to shield you from all your enemies. In order that you may receive that holy Spirit, you must prepare yourselves carefully to celebrate the feast of Pentecost with sincerity and earnestness. Let us examine a little the necessity of receiving the Holy Ghost, and how we are to prepare for Him.

Every one of you, my dear young people, knows, as did the

prophet Job, that this world which we inhabit is a great battle-field, on which we are surrounded by most stubborn and watchful enemies, and that we have to enter on a struggle with them. Hardly have we come into it, and have reached the use of reason, than the fight begins. These enemies aim at the soul; the life of the body is nothing to them, they wish to ruin the soul. They are powerful enemies, against whom we can do nothing of ourselves. We can easily see, then, that we need the assistance of the Holy Spirit very much.

In the first place, we must fight with the world, our great enemy. The world has an intelligence of its own; it teaches bad doctrines which, though in appearance are most inviting and even most natural, are wrong in principle. For example, the world has the strong conviction that they alone are happy who enjoy themselves; that while you are young, at least, you ought to enjoy the flower of your youth before it withers; that it will be time enough to give up pleasure when old age makes it insipid. How many such poor deluded souls are about us! The world insists that money makes one happy; that one must always have his purse well filled; that one's whole soul should be fully awake to the means of getting wealth, and heaping it up in abundance. One must be smart; by fair means or foul he must procure money. Money is the god of the world; so much so that it forgets real wealth, which is purity of soul and the possession of heaven in course of time. St. Paul tells us that "they that will become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which hurl men into destruction and perdition."

The world would have us consider in the next place that we must look for honors and esteem; and then running after the false honors of the world we forget the real honor, the true greatness of leading a good life and in the end of being placed in paradise by almighty God.

Are these not very deceptive doctrines? How can you dis-

cover their fallacy unless the Holy Ghost enlightens you? Not only does the world teach you these fallacies, but like a tutor, it shows you an example of the good fortunes of those who have succeeded in gaining wealth.

Look at the great number of successful men in the world that have not a spark of religion and who are proud of it. These men are ashamed to be humble followers of Jesus Christ; their charity is turned into philanthropy; they are ashamed to go to church, to hear Mass or a sermon, to go to the sacraments or to show any sign of Christianity. On the contrary, they make a parade of their vices; they prefer them to following Christ. Such are the consequences of the bad doctrines of the world. How thankful you ought to be that you are not like them. It is only by being enlightened by the Holy Ghost that you will continue to love "the better part."

The devil himself is our great adversary on the battle-field of this world. Of what deception and snares does he not make use to lead us to a fall! "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." St. Stanislaus Kostka while he was at prayer was visited by the devil: what a horrible object he was, perfectly black and hideous; his eyes shone in his head like ominous lights, which seemed to scatter fire on whatever object he directed them; his mouth was like the opening of hell. Stanislaus put this infernal creature to flight by the sign of the cross, and nothing daunted quietly continued his prayers, thanking God that he had the power of getting rid so easily of such an unwelcome visitor. I suppose the devil visited Stanislaus to disturb his peace of mind or even to fill him with fear; but not for a moment could the Evil One induce this good, holy soul to infringe God's law in the least.

You need have no fear of receiving a visit from the devil in person; but he puts on the grab of an angel of light, a serpent of beautiful colors. "It goeth in pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake." The devil shows us sin in

its most attractive exterior; he tempts you as he did Eve, and will battle with the same arguments. Eve was afraid she would die, but he assured her, "Not at all; you will not die, and you will have all pleasures, which it will not do to miss." What of the bad companions you go with, my dear young people? The devil will argue, "What harm? You may do some good, you will have a good time. If there is any one in this world that is a wearisome fellow, it is certainly a pious chap; a certain degree of wickedness is required to make life spicy. And then why live such a timid existence; what kind of a life is it, when at every turn some one says, 'Don't do that.' You pass your days in listening to 'don'ts.' You have to watch your words and your thoughts, no useless talks, you cannot have the pleasure of sin, even in imagination; what a dismal life it is which is a continual struggle! Give it all up," says the devil, "and lead a happy sort of life; don't be wicked exactly."

The devil tries by every means in his power to get at your soul by the channels of your body and your senses; by your eyes through your sight, by your ears through your hearing, by your sense of feeling, by your imagination, and in this way he keeps up the attack, until he gets possession of you: he is not satisfied with that mischief, he demands more and more, until at last he has corrupted you completely. There is no rest; down we go, because the descent is so easy, until as disciples of the devil we are more wicked than the devil himself; we can at least do much more harm, for the devil makes use of men to corrupt others, and they become his agents afterwards.

Thus the good priest sees thousands of souls continually going over to Satan: souls that were good at one time, but now are entirely lost to God; souls who absolutely refuse to hear of God, and who try to persuade themselves that there is no God.

Another enemy on the battle-field is the flesh. This enemy is so intimately connected with us that we continually

carry it about, and it is the occasion of many of our falls. The flesh has so many animal propensities, which are wrong, and unworthy of so noble a master as the God-like soul. The flesh is impure and filthy, and wants to satisfy its appetites, like an animal; it is avaricious to possess a great deal, so that a good time may be assured for the body. Is not the soul, the pure, immortal soul, far greater than the flesh? its difficult task is to discipline the unruly body and bring it under subjection and become master of it. The saints succeeded in so doing, but oh, by what great labor! How perseveringly they mortified their bodies, even to their last breath. But how did they succeed in subjecting this flesh? By the blessed Spirit of God, whom we are expecting at this time and whose feast we are celebrating.

Now, my dear young people, come with me to the place where we will find the Apostles gathered together and the Blessed Virgin in the midst of them. They are quiet and retired, they are praying for the coming of the Holy Ghost, and also for detachment from the things of this world. My dear young people, are your hearts detached from this life? Not yet, you will say, but you are trying to cut off more and more the love you have for the world. Your thoughts are still on the earth: does that not make you forget the heavenly paradise for which you are on trial?

For the great feast of Pentecost, the Apostles prepared themselves by devout prayer and holy meditation. They retired to the cenacle, a quiet place, and there waited the pleasure of God to send them the Holy Spirit. How do we poor mortals generally pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit? I think we do not pray at all, for we have very little devotion to the Holy Ghost; but let us, at least at this holy time, pray to the Holy Spirit, that He may come unto our soul; for prayer will surely bring Him to us.

Lastly, the Apostles had a great desire to receive the Holy Ghost; Our Lord Jesus Himself put this desire into their hearts, and therefore they wished the Comforter to come to

them. Let us invoke this Holy Spirit with fervent prayers, and have a great desire for Him, that He may come down to us with His choicest gifts.

PENTECOST SUNDAY.

GOSPEL. *John* xiv. 23-31. *At that time, Jesus said to his disciples:* If any man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words. And the word which you have heard is not mine: but the Father's who sent me. These things have I spoken to you, abiding with you. But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. You have heard that I have said to you: I go away and come again to you. If you loved me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father: for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass: that when it shall come to pass, you may believe. I will not now speak many things with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and in me he hath not anything. But that the world may know that I love the Father: and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE disciples and the Blessed Virgin were assembled in the cenacle. For ten days they had been meditating and praying in unison with God, when of a sudden a great noise was heard, as of a violent hurricane, which shook the house in which they were, and then they saw that fiery tongues settled down on the heads of each one of them. They felt themselves illumined, strengthened, encouraged by the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost. They began to speak in different languages. People of every nation had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the great Jewish feast of Pentecost, a feast which

was held by them in commemoration of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai to Moses; and all the Jews wished to see the magnificent ceremonies in their temple in Jerusalem.

Though these Jews had come from different places, where different languages were spoken, still they understood what the Apostles said. Such were the wonderful effects which the Holy Ghost produced in the Apostles. They were illumined by a clear, celestial light, which made them understand all the truths of God, and the future Church, and gave them the faculty of forming right judgment in all things that came under their jurisdiction.

This will also be the effect on you, my dear young people, if you beg the Holy Spirit to come into your hearts. You will feel these effects when He has come, and your way of thinking, your old way of judging, will have changed. New thoughts and other desires will grow up in you. You understand what the thoughts of young people are generally; what their hearts are fixed on; what they delight in. The young man and woman want pleasure, enjoyment, plenty of money, and good company, and they care not whether these things are sinful or not. But when the Spirit of God shall come into their hearts they will no longer love what is sinful; they will avoid all such pleasures. Then they will know, too, that all in this world is vanity, and that it is all-important to serve God and love Him.

Not only did the Holy Spirit infuse a great light into the minds of the Apostles—He also inspired them with great courage. After the death of Christ, the Apostles had become very much disheartened, and very fretful. They had not the courage to stand up openly and boldly. Before the death of Christ, Peter even denied Christ three times, and the Apostles all fled in dismay when He was apprehended. As soon as the Holy Ghost had come down on them they were changed men; they no longer feared; they confessed Christ before the tribunals of tyrants; they were not dismayed at tortures; they feared neither the sword nor the bitterest

death; they braved every danger to preach the Gospel before the nations of the earth.

My dear young people, if you really receive the Holy Ghost into your hearts, you also will courageously profess the faith of Christ, and human respect will not affect you any more. How many, however, are there who in spite of having received the strength and illumination of the Divine Spirit, are weak and infirm in doing good; they fear to speak a word of correction to a wicked companion, who is likely to draw them away from the path of rectitude.

With all the other gifts came that of holy charity upon the Apostles. With what lively flames of love did not their hearts burn towards their neighbor. Charity is the great virtue of the Apostles. With their hearts burning with this divine flame they went forth to enkindle it in all parts of the world, and to set the hearts of all on fire. Their sermons were frequent appeals to the intellect and hearts of their hearers. At St. Peter's first sermon three thousand were converted, and at another five thousand. St. Peter came out on a balcony, his face all aglow with a holy zeal. It is thus related in the Acts of the Apostles: "Ye men of Israel hear these words: JESUS of Nazareth a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you also know: This same being delivered up, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain: Now when they had heard these things, they had compunction in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles: What shall we do, men *and* brethren? But Peter saith to them: Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." They were converted, and baptized; they, too, received the Holy Ghost, and after that became zealous members of the holy faith.

Let us pray, my dear young people, that the Holy Spirit

kindle in our hearts also this fire, that we may become, like the Apostles, strong in word to persuade people to follow Christ; and that we ourselves show our love for God by openly practising virtue. Happy shall we be if such is the fire of love of God and man in our hearts.

But is your heart really inflamed with divine love? Do you not on the contrary feel that you are cold and careless? Few there are indeed among young people who think so much of religion and God that they become enthusiastic to do something for His greater glory. In your younger days, in your school-days, perhaps, you were better; you loved God more tenderly. Now it may be said of you, "You always resist the Holy Ghost." You have the spirit of the world and of sin for your guide, and in this way you sadden the Holy Ghost. We resist the Holy Ghost when we go to confession, and fall back into sin, because we do not reform our lives, as the Holy Spirit asks of us. We resist the Holy Ghost and sadden Him when we follow bad companions, when we are disobedient or impudent to our superiors, who wish to guide us in the paths of virtue. On the contrary we give joy to the Holy Spirit by our good will, and He will fill our hearts with His heavenly graces. Should one of you not yet be confirmed, let him look for an opportunity to receive this sacrament, so that he may receive the necessary virtues which it confers, namely: the spirit of Wisdom, and of Intellect, spirit of Counsel and of Fortitude, of Piety and of Knowledge, of the Fear of the Lord. In order that we may be filled with the Holy Ghost, let us live always a pure, good, and holy life. It is only with those who lead such a life that the Spirit of God remains. We read a beautiful example illustrating this in the Roman breviary. The impious governor Paschasius asked of St. Lucy, "Is this Holy Ghost in you?" The virgin answered, "They whose hearts are pure, and who live piously, are the temples of the Holy Ghost." "But," said the wicked man, "I will make you fall into sin, and then the Holy Ghost will leave you." To which the virgin Lucy

answered, "I will remain faithful to God, and not consent to sin, and the Holy Spirit will double my reward of glory." Then the tyrant had her dragged to a place of infamy. Arriving there she stood so firm in the one spot that no power could move her further, and she had to be brought back, when she said to the tyrant: "You see, now, I am the temple of the Holy Ghost, and He protects me; no power on earth can move me, unless He permits it." In this wise, too, should we fly from sin, and we shall be the temple of God and the habitation of the Holy Ghost. Come, O Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, enkindle in them the fire of Thy love. Yes, the Holy Spirit will help us to pray "with inexpressible groans." Let us pray to the Holy Ghost, and in our soul will burn such a flame that we will not be able to resist any longer, we shall run delighted in the odor of the love of God. Then may we repeat the words of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians: "All you are the children of light and children of the day."

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Luke* vi. 36-42. *At that time, Jesus said to his disciples:* Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again. And he spoke also to them a similitude: Can the blind lead the blind? do they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one shall be perfect, if he be as his master. And why seest thou the mote in thy brother's eye: but the beam that is in thy own eye thou considerest not? Or how canst thou say to thy brother: Brother, let me pull the mote out of thy eye: when thou thyself seest not the beam in thy own eye? Hypocrite, cast first the beam out of thy own eye: and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy brother's eye.

THE VIRTUE OF CHARITY.

THE great lesson to-day, my good young people, is, that we should be kind-hearted, merciful, and charitable. The saints, the friends of God, were charitable. What did they do for their fellow-men? Did they possess a thing and not give it away? Did they spare themselves in any way in their labors for the benefit of others? They tried to be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful, and if we wish to be perfect, we must endeavor to be the same.

Then Our Lord wished us to be very careful in our judgment of others. "Judge not, that you may not be judged." Be careful of being suspicious, lest you form rash judgments accordingly. Do not put a bad construction on others' actions; do not ascribe bad motives to them. When a man does a good act, do not suspect him of a bad motive, and thus lead yourself and others to question the merit of it.

St. Augustine says, "If you have charity for others, you will wish only what is good for them." A good and wise teacher of morality gives this beautiful lesson: "Humility does not see the faults of others; simplicity does not believe them; charity does not disclose them." But, you will say, am I to be such a fool, that if I see my companion doing wrong, I am to believe he is doing good? Do not, of course, think an evil action a good one; that would be nonsensical; but may there not be many extenuating circumstances which will make him less culpable? Pray for the culprit with charity in your soul, and think what you would be, had not God kept you from sin; what falls would have been yours; what disgrace; consider your frailty, and ask yourself sincerely, "Why am I still good? Does it depend on myself?" O, no, you must admit, it was a special providence that cared for you more than for others. They fell deeply; you, too, would have fallen and further; but the mercy of God held on to you for its own ends.

A good monk who witnessed the sad fall of a soul in the

spiritual life, said in the most compassionate tone, "Alas, it is his turn to-day; it may be mine to-morrow."

Our Lord commands us to forgive injuries, saying, "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." How easily we are aroused to anger, and how hard it is to come forward, with open hand and open heart, to meet a friend who has offended us, and take him back to our confidence. The slightest disagreement repels us from each other, and immediately there seems to be an impassable gulf, which shame and stubbornness or our own meanness will not allow us to bridge.

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart." Do you know when you can refuse to look your companion kindly in the face? When he comes to you to lead you into sin; then your anger and zeal may show itself, and you may let him know that you are no friend of his; a man who injures your soul cannot be looked upon with indifference. But in all other things, be careful to keep charity; forget and forgive injuries. Our Lord in another Gospel tells us, "If we love one another, God abideth in us and His charity is perfected in us." What a beautiful example of this virtue have the first Christians given us; even the pagans used to admire them in their charity and love towards one another. What fights and grudges are often seen among our young men; if they have anything against another, they take the law in their own hands, and undertake to punish the offender. Give that up, and look for no revenge; revenge and punishment really belong to God; let Him take charge of your grievance, and at the same time pray fervently to God, that He deal lightly with your enemy and not punish him.

Our Lord gives us a great example of forgiveness to our enemies. What did Our Lord do for His enemies? He prayed to His heavenly Father: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus was God Himself, and to do any injury to God ought naturally to bring down the anger of the Deity on the offender. He could have sent a legion of angels against them, or He might have allowed fire

and brimstone to fall upon them and consume them. But not so with God. He waits patiently, sending His grace into their poor hearts to see if they would become better. The saints did the very same thing; for they loved their enemies and performed many acts of kindness for them, forgetting every injury that was committed against them.

Our Lord in teaching charity certainly could not omit one great act of charity. He asks us to practise almsgiving. My dear young people, you have not yet the means of giving alms of your own; hence you are not obliged to observe this command; still learn early to feel for the poor. Do not laugh at their poverty, their dirt, their tattered garments, or their roughness; have compassion on them, show sympathy for them, and help them if you can. "Reach out your hand to the poor." What you give to the poor shall not be thrown away, it will return to you again sometime, in divine blessings.

What do we see good people do, not to speak of saints? They are kind-hearted and hospitable, they share their possessions with others to a certain degree. It is not necessary to give our all, but to give a little from it. Our Lord has promised great things to those who have acted in this spirit of charity. He will repay us with a measure that is well heaped up, well shaken down and overflowing.

We have to carry a good record of charity toward our neighbor to the judgment-seat of God, for there this very question will be discussed. Our Lord has already described that judgment in the Gospels: "When the Son of man will come in His majesty He will say, I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink. Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me." Our Lord gives a parable about the blind leading the blind; they both fall into the ditch. The parable is plain enough; a blind man would not entrust himself to another blind man to be led. And yet it is done frequently in the spiritual life. Do you not entrust yourself

to the guidance of blind companions? You are blind already, because your passions do not allow you clear judgment, and you consult some one on your imaginary difficulty. The devil is ready for you, he knows your dilemma, and at the right time he brings one who will advise you according to his ideas; these ideas coincide with your own, you are confirmed in your evil resolution, and both of you fall into the ditch of sin. The priest sees this very often. Not a day passes but young men and women of his parish go off with their blind counsellors. How have they fallen into those sins? "Ah, my dear father, a bad guide, a bad companion led me astray, and reduced me to this condition; once I was pure, I did not even suspect there were such sins; but I was led into them, and now I have satisfied my taste for them. I have ruined my life, and I am a miserable wreck."

But this is not the worst of it; that we have been led into sin is bad, but far worse is it to stay in sin and to continue to indulge in those vices. It is related by Thomas Cantiprates of a companion who was led astray and died a horrible death without having time to go to confession. He died with these words in his mouth, "I am now going to hell—but what about him who dragged me into sin?" If he said this before he was judged, what would his words be when he stood at the gates of hell, and looked back at his fearful loss for a never-ending eternity.

You wish to go to heaven. Well, then, choose for yourself a good priest, a good confessor; chosen from among thousands, as St. Francis de Sales used to say. Pray fervently to Our Lord, that as He sent the archangel Raphael to guide Tobias, so He will send you, if not an angel, a man of angelic qualities; and to him yield up your guidance entirely. This man, enlightened by God, will show you the way that leads to eternal life. "Make your ways and your doings good, and I will dwell with you."

St. Philip Neri, when he observed a youth who governed himself well, frequented the Sacraments, and allowed himself

to be directed by a good confessor, used to say, "If he does not go to heaven, who will?" Our Lord in His sermon on the mount says, "Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye." You hypocrite, take first the beam from your own eye; then you may be able to remove the mote from your brother's. We see the smallest defect in others, but of our own great shortcomings we make not the least difficulty. Thomas à Kempis tells us, "In others we blame the smallest failings, whilst the greater defects in ourselves we pass over lightly." You notice a slight disobedience in your companion, and you cry out in astonishment, "What insubordination!" You see another talking in church. "What little piety he has!" you say. Another has been caught in a lie; you never forget it; in your eyes he is a liar forever. In short, you see the mote in your brother's eye. Since you know that you are sometimes guilty of these very failings yourself, do you ever say to yourself, "You unruly fellow, you liar, you wretch without devotion"? Therefore study to know yourself, and by frequent examination of conscience learn your own condition. Be humble, for humility is pleasing to God, and you will not be of the number of those of whom Jesus Christ speaks, "Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Gospel. *Luke* xiv. 16-24. *At that time:* Jesus spoke to the Pharisees this parable: A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him: I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it: I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them; I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said: I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot

come. And the servant returning told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city: and bring in hither the poor and the feeble, and the blind and the lame. And the servant said: Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said to the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges; and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. But I say unto you that none of those men that were invited, shall taste of my supper.

THE GREAT FEAST TO WHICH ALL ARE INVITED.

We are within the octave of the most beautiful feast of the Church, the feast of Corpus Christi; and the Church wisely chooses the parable of the great feast to which all are invited as the subject of our meditation to-day. This great feast represents the most august, the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, and with what great solemnity it is celebrated! The altars are magnificently decorated, innumerable lights are lighted, incense ascends in clouds, processions are formed, benediction is given so as to make us understand that the good Jesus is with us, and that hence we should love Him and adore Him. In order that you may be moved to this love, think of the great love, even the excess of love, by which the Lord invites us to so rich, so magnificent a banquet—in which He offers His sacred flesh as our food, and His precious blood as our drink.

"A certain rich man made a great feast." Enter the hall of the Last Supper at Jerusalem, where the divine Redeemer sat among His Apostles. Jesus, His face aglow with divine love, turns at the end of the meal to His disciples and tells them that the hour has come when He must return to the Father; but He bids them be not afraid nor dejected, for He will remain with them till the end of time. Then He took bread into His hands, those hands which made heaven and earth, and blessed it and said, "This is My body which is given for you; do this for a commemoration of Me. In

like manner the chalice also after He had supped, saying, This is the chalice of the New Testament in My blood, which shall be shed for you." To understand the great love with which the amiable Saviour did this, consider when this was done. Not in those days when Our Saviour was going about in His glory, working miracles before the admiring crowd that followed Him. He did not even institute this holy Sacrament when, after having preached and moved the people, a woman cried out, "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the paps that gave Thee suck." Not in the days of His triumph, when He had fed five thousand people, and had led them spellbound for days through the country, and they came to take Him by force and make Him king. He did not institute it on that glorious feast, Palm Sunday, when He made His entry into Jerusalem, the houses, the streets, and the gates of the city adorned for His reception, and the people crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." But He instituted this holy Sacrament on that sorrowful night when He was to be apprehended through the treachery of Judas, His apostle, when the soldiers were about to lay violent hands on Him and drag Him most contumeliously to the house of Caiphas. The night on which He was betrayed was the night on which Our Lord instituted the Blessed Sacrament. You will appreciate still more the love of Our Lord in instituting this holy Sacrament by remembering that He foresaw all that was about to happen to Him: the insults, scourging, crowning; the carelessness, coldness, and infidelity of humanity was all before His mind; He saw the want of faith, the want of gratitude among the Christians themselves. He foresaw that the Sacrament would be sacrilegiously used and abused. That many Christians would eat and drink judgment unto their souls for not discerning the body of Christ. Every day Our Lord goes into hearts that are good, and into hearts that are the abominable residence of the devil. But the love of Jesus overcame all difficulties, and in the excess of His

love He cried out, "My delight is to be with the children of men." He did not wish to remain with us only for a time, but forever, unto the end of the world. It would have been a great favor had He left His body in only one place on this earth, so that it would have been necessary to travel many miles to reach His tabernacle. But, no; He preferred to remain within our cities, near our houses, in our villages, out in the lonesome country, in every church where the Holy Eucharist is kept, and there He remains day and night. What a great favor it would have been had He promised us that once in a lifetime we might receive Him. But He desires that we go frequently to Him, and He even binds us by a command that we must receive His body, and drink His blood if we wish to have life in us. "Amen, amen, I say to you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you."

Continually does the good Lord coax us to come to Him, and in familiar intercourse to lay our troubles before Him, that He may carry them for us. "Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." How sweet and encouraging must not these words sound to the poor sinner. These words, "Come all," ought to make us run with unbounded confidence, as the invitation implies. But how do the generality of Christians answer this invitation of Our Lord? Do they often go to the Lord's Supper and eat the Sacred Bread? Many after this kind invitation will stay away, refusing to yield to the loving importunities of Our Lord. They say we cannot come, we love the world more than Thee, we would rather feast on the pleasure of this world than feed on that spiritual food which Thou dost offer us; we are too busy with our worldly affairs, and we cannot come. Will they not deserve the sentence which the master of the feast gave out, "But I say unto you, that none of these men that were invited shall taste of my supper." If they do not come to this feast they shall not enter heaven. Is there a beggar faint with hunger who, if he was kindly invited by

the king to come into a great banquet hall, there to satisfy himself with delicious food, that would not willingly listen to the invitation, and be glad he had an opportunity of eating at the king's table? He would be a fool if he said, "I cannot come." The sick man near his death would not refuse a new lease of life and freedom from sickness. Those who remain afar from Jesus are poor, famished beggars, miserable invalids, because they are in want of the food of the soul which Our Lord offers. You see then the blindness and folly of people who refuse to go to Jesus.

What a consolation it is to all good Christians to love God's altar and to go frequently to holy communion. You are therefore the guard of honor of the Blessed Sacrament; defend it now, and show your real faith in it. Keep yourselves steadfast in this holy devotion, this holy adoration. The time will perhaps come when you will no longer have your child-like faith and fervor at the altar. What has become of it? Ah! it is the old story; you fell away and cared no more for this heavenly food.

Let us love this sacred table of Our Lord. Let us ever hunger for the spiritual food, the body of Christ; do not love the banquets of the world, for they will make you forget this heavenly feast. Let it not be said there was a time when you were good; but having begun well, being nourished by the body and blood of Christ, grow in virtue, become good Christian men and women, and faithful to the teaching of your youth; often receive the Sacraments of Confession and Communion. The danger is, that in the course of time you may become careless. Knowing this forgetfulness, join a society which will keep you from bad surroundings and encourage you in the practice of your duty.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Luke* xv. 1-10. *At that time,* the publicans and sinners drew near unto Jesus to hear him. And the Pharisees and the Scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spoke to them this parable, saying: What man is there of you that hath an hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders rejoicing; and coming home call together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance. Or what woman having ten groats, if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, call together her friends and neighbors saying: Rejoice with me, because I have found the groat which I had lost. So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.

THE LOST SHEEP.

THIS Gospel is a most consoling one, for it speaks of the mercy of God. Often a sinner who hears himself menaced with the terrible chastisements of that great Last Judgment Day, or with sudden death, or with the never-ending tortures of hell, is not at all moved, but continues in his sins. But when he hears of the great mercy of God, and listens to such invitations as this, "Be ye converted to the Lord your God, because He is good and merciful," he yields himself up as conquered, he sheds tears over his transgressions, and a most notable conversion is often the result. If any of you, my dear young people, find yourselves in the unhappy state of sin, and are putting off your conversion from day to day, when you hear to-day's Gospel, treating of the mercy of God; of how much He desires the conversion of sinners; of how well they shall be received into the fraternal bosom of Jesus, I am sure

you will abandon the ways of sin and become a victim of divine love.

The Pharisees and people of bad repute were pressing about Our Saviour and listening attentively to His sacred words. But they took occasion to criticise the conduct of Our Lord, and said of Him, "This man receives sinners, and eats with them." Our Lord knew their thoughts, and refuted them with the parables of "The good shepherd" and "The woman and the lost groat."

My dear young people, could Our Lord have given greater proof of His desire that the sinner may be converted and repent? Even in the severe law of the Old Testament, repentance was possible and the wicked invited to conform themselves to it. "I desire not the death of the wicked." "O house of Israel, be converted and do penance." Were these not beautiful expressions of God's sympathy for the poor sinner; do they not show us that the sinner should be converted and live? But much more plainly does the parable of the good shepherd teach us this desire of God.

My dear young Christians, have you ever gone away from God by falling into sin, by giving up the sheepfold of the good pastor? No doubt there are some among you that have. This Good Shepherd did not delay an instant, but rose and went forth into the wild desert of sin to look for you in every place, watching over you, and inviting you to come back. What caresses and kindness did He not shower on you, just to make you look up at Him and recognize Him again! What inspirations did He not infuse into your hearts! What bitter hours of compunction did you not sometimes feel! To what disgrace you were reduced: loss of honor, loss of everything, so that you had to cry out with the prodigal son, "I perish with hunger." When you were the most miserable and abject creature on the earth, did He give you up in disgust? No; the lower you had fallen, the greater was His mercy: even though fallen very low, you were still His lost son. He approached you in the kindliest manner, and said,

"My son, we stand in such relation to each other, that we ought to love each other. Why are you deaf to My entreaties? Why do you continue to commit sin? Not a day passes but you commit new sins. The earth with all its creatures cries to Me to pour My vengeance on your head; but I wish to pardon." Why does the merciful Lord wait so long? The answer is plain from what we have seen: in order that you may have time to be converted and live again in His grace.

Will God really forgive us? Can any one doubt that God will not pardon us? Oh, I have been so sinful; from my very childhood I began to offend Him; in fact, my sins have become more numerous than the hairs of my head. Will He still pardon me? Ah, my dear children, do not add to your other sins one which is the blackest of all: the mistrust in God's mercy, by the sin of despair. To despair is nothing less than condemning yourself to hell. If He did not desire to forgive, why has He waited so long, and so patiently? His desire is to pardon you, provided you are really contrite; provided you say with the prodigal: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee." No sooner have you said these words with a heartfelt sorrow than He has already wiped out the account of your sins. "I will not remember all his iniquities." He will place the kiss of peace on your forehead, He will give you back your heavenly inheritance. He will give all the angels a great feast on this occasion. "I say to you there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance." You shall be more dear to God the greater your sins have been. Is this strange, my good young people? Magdalene was a public sinner, her reputation was very bad; but after her conversion she became dear to Our Lord. How privileged she was in loving Him! how He defended her, and raised His hands in benediction and absolution over her! "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." Never afterwards did He mention her faults. Margaret of Cortona had also led a scandalous life, but after her conversion Our Lord appeared

to her and said, "Thou art My beloved sinner," and told her He would make use of her to bring back other sinners.

But I certainly hope I shall not be misunderstood, nor that some may say: "If God is so merciful, I can continue in my dissolute life; at some future time I will ask Him for mercy, and He will parden me." If such should be an excuse for our sins, God in His justice would withdraw His mercy: it is one thing to ask for mercy for sin, but quite a different thing to remain in sin because God is merciful. No, my dear young people, never abuse the mercy of God, because then you will excite the wrath of the Almighty against you. Once God has pardoned you who knows whether He will pardon you again; there is certainly a limit to His mercy, otherwise you might say with truth that God encouraged you in your sins. Because God is so merciful will you offend His goodness? Should you not be grateful for past kindnesses?

Ah, my good children, let us hate ourselves for our miserable conduct; let us chastise ourselves for having so long abused the divine mercy. Turn to your Father and throw yourselves into His arms, and He will carry the dear lost sheep back to the fold.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Gospel. *Luke* v. 1-11. *At that time*, when the multitude pressed upon Jesus to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Genesareth. And he saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And going into one of the ships that was Simon's, he desired him to draw back a little from the land. And sitting, he taught the multitudes out of the ship. Now when he had ceased to speak, he said to Simon: Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said to him: Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing: but at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes, and their net broke. And they beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking:

which, when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying: Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was wholly astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken. And so were also James and John the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. And Jesus saith to Simon: Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And having brought their ships to land, leaving all things, they followed him.

THE WONDERFUL DRAUGHT OF FISHES.

Our Lord was so kind to all, and worked so many miracles, that His fame traveled far and wide; from all quarters of Judea the people sought Him and crowded about Him in immense and ever-increasing numbers. His words bore with them so much grace, that they melted every heart, even the hardest. He was "full of grace and truth." Consider, my dear children, the anxiety of that crowd to hear the word of God; they follow Him along the shores of the lake, through the desert, and through the country. They leave their trades, their daily avocations; they forget even the necessary food for the body, their rest, their sleep. Tell me, my dear young people, do we find this same love for the word of God among the young people of to-day? Instead, we find disgust for a sermon, and our young folk staying away from church because a sermon is to be preached. In vain do parents and teachers advise them. How blind they are not to see the necessity of listening to the word of God! But let us hope that you, my children, are not of that number; that you will listen with attention and keep the words you hear in your heart, where they will be the food of your souls.

As soon as Our Lord had finished His discourse, He bid St. Peter row out into the lake and let down his net. Peter gave answer: "Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing, but at Thy word I will let down the net." We must admire the prompt obedience of Peter in thus casting the net. Everything had been put away after a fruitless night's labor; but now, at Our Lord's command, he obeys.

Do you obey with the same promptitude? We disobey our superiors in little things as well as in great. They tell us to avoid certain company which is the occasion of sin to us; that we should go to church and to the Sacraments. Do you, my good young people, always take heed of these instructions? I am afraid that you go where you like, and do as you please; there is no one whom you hold in sufficient respect to take a command from him. These are serious matters. It has now almost come to it, that a father and mother have to obey their children; this is not only a serious matter, but disorderly in the eyes of God. Let us see what Deuteronomy says of disobedient sons and daughters: They are to be taken outside the gates and stoned. This severity of the Old Testament no longer exists, though the State makes laws for disobedient minors, locking them up till they are of age. Still that severity of the Old Testament is a figure of God's judgment for disobedience. Be obedient, then, my young friends, and docile to your parents and superiors. There is no more beautiful and attractive sight than to see an obedient son or daughter, respectful in every way to his or her parents; such obedience will bring down a blessing from almighty God, according to the promises made in the Old Testament.

I would like to say a word about the answer Peter made to Jesus, "Master, we have labored all the night and have taken nothing." These words can be put into our mouth in many instances; all our life we have worked, but what have we for it? The days of our life are gliding by uselessly, we have labored in vain. O! let us awake at the command of Our Lord and do something; let us not pass our time in sleep or in labor that is all fatigue and no gain. We do everything for the body; we feed and care for it, clothe and wash it, give it exercise to keep it supple, and this body is soon to end and be carried to the grave; but what do we do for the well-being of our soul? We do but little, as if we were not spiritual beings.

Oh, when the misguided people who have been so busy through life, come to the hour of their death, then they will see the truth of the words: "We have labored all the night and have taken nothing." A certain worldly man, who was not a bad Christian, was on his death-bed; certain acts of his gave him great concern; the confessor was at hand and tried to inspire him with confidence in the mercy of God, for the action which he bewailed so much was after all a small matter. "Ah!" replied the dying man, "dear Father, wait until you have the blessed candle in your hand, and the hour of your death near; then you will not say these things are small matters; then every defect in your life will assume a great magnitude." Many things that now appear to us as fun and frolic will then seem to us mortal sins. Those lustful glances, those bad confessions in which, out of shame, you refrained from telling all your sins; those communions made in a state of doubtful conscience, will then rise before you and you will not be able to silence the interior voice by persuading yourself that those matters are of little moment. Oh! if we only worked half as hard to save our souls as others do to damn them, we would become saints. "They have fatigued themselves in doing evil."

Look how you have abused the precious graces which God has given you! What will you think of those lost opportunities? You were brought up well, and put on the path to heaven. You often heard the word of God, and received the Sacraments. With all these advantages you should have become a saint. But remember, my dear young people, if you understand at the hour of your death the evil you have done, it is a great grace, for with the help of the Sacraments it will lead you to conversion. It often happens that even at the hour of death you do not recognize your wickedness; only when you die, and are judged, will you see, alas, too late! that you have led an evil life. Did not this happen to the rich man of whom Our Lord speaks? While he lived, as the Gospel describes, he had the enjoyment of wealth to its fullest

extent; he dressed in the height of fashion, had a luxurious table and pleasures of every kind; but he was buried in hell, and when he opened his eyes he saw the poor Lazarus, whom he had despised, in Abraham's bosom. What an awakening to reason, and to a recognition of his duties! You who are still in life can repair the evil you have done, and accomplish something to merit heaven; perhaps God may yet give you many days to labor for eternal life.

Our divine Redeemer saw the astonishment of Peter when that great mass of fish was caught. Peter knew it was a miracle, and a miracle wrought as a reward for his obedience, and, recognizing his unworthiness, he cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He thought himself unworthy to be received into the company of Him whom he acknowledged to be his God. But Our Lord infused a new life into him, gave him a new calling, forgave all the past, and corrected it by His holy grace. "Fear not," said Jesus, "from henceforth thou shalt catch men." How can we, too, my young people, become fishers of men? We can do it by good example among our companions. In the past we may have ruined many a soul by the wickedness of our life; we may have drawn them gradually into a life of sin. What dreadful evil have we done! How hard it will be to make up for it, for, while we are converted, have we not perhaps this sorrow before our eyes that the evil we have started is still growing in those whom we have perverted? Let us, then, still try to do something practical to endeavor to bring back those we have led astray; let us pray for them, seek them, and speak to them. Let us follow Our Saviour as did St. Peter, who followed Jesus after he had been called and remained faithful in his vocation. "Come, follow Me."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* v. 20-24. *At that time, Jesus said to his disciples:* Amen I tell you, unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you: that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, Thou fool: shall be in danger of hell fire. If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee: leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift.

CHARITY TOWARD OUR NEIGHBOR.

THE Pharisees and Scribes were a certain class of Jews who in outward habits were most scrupulously correct. They fasted, prayed publicly in the Temple, and gave ostentatious alms. Our Lord knew them: He could see into their hearts, and knew that they were not sincere. Therefore He said: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Their virtues were only a show, and did not reach the soul; so wicked were they that their hearts were the seat of most abominable vices. Our Lord called them whitened sepulchres; all was well on the outside, but the inside was full of the vilest corruption.

Have we not Pharisees among us, my dear young friends? There are people who put on the appearance of sanctity: they might be thought angels of perfection, but they are whitened sepulchres, full of loathsome corruption and horrible vices. They wish to commit sin, and they indulge in it; they keep their vices secret; they put on the appearance of purity to the eyes of others; they keep up a certain respectability. In their eyes, to be caught and to be known as having com-

mitted certain vices is more disgraceful than to sin. We are frequently deceived by appearances; but God, who sees into the heart, cannot be deceived. What good would result from it, if every one should consider you good, while in reality you are bad; you certainly do not think you will gain any merit by an outward show of virtue. There are people who actually wish to be wicked; they are not ashamed of it, but boast of the fact and wish to be praised for it. Some will openly break the law of the fasts of the Church and not hide it; they despise that law as unreasonable. When in public eating-houses with their companions, they will make known their aversion to the law by eating meat on forbidden days. The Pharisees loved to make a display of their piety in the church: a thing which, after all, cannot be called bad, for the good Christian does this and should do it. But are there not young men who go to church to laugh and to talk? The Pharisees looked for the high and honored places as a kind of tribute to their exalted virtues. Are there not young men who exult in evil, and want to be the ringleaders in crime?

Older brothers are frequently the teachers of vice to their younger brethren. How many, therefore, rise in the pulpit of sin to teach iniquity and put themselves forward, so that they may lead others into sin? What will Our Lord say of such people, when He was so severe on the Pharisees? Are they not worse? The Pharisees gave good example in some things.

After Our Lord had made the declaration, "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," He continues: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you: that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca: shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, Thou fool: shall be in danger of hell fire. If therefore thou offer thy

gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee: Leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother: and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." In these words Our Lord recommends charity toward our neighbor. I remember that in one of my former sermons I spoke about this very point. I shall not now repeat it, only to say again: keep no anger in your heart against any one for any offence whatever; for God will take no excuse for enmity, and will make you give a very rigorous account on the judgment day. Never say any injurious words against your neighbor or your enemy; never make fun of him, or play wicked jokes on him; never laugh at old people on account of their infirmities or poverty. Remember the punishment that came on the children who mocked the prophet Eliseus. The prophet was going up a little hill when a crowd of young urchins amused themselves by saying, "Go up, thou bald-head." The prophet could not contain his holy anger against children so badly brought up, so ill behaved. He turned to them and said, "Cursed be ye in the name of God." As soon as he had spoken two big bears came forth from the woods and tore the boys in pieces. Was not this a most terrible punishment? And here let me say, too, never make fun of priests or Religious. Do not say mean things to them as Protestant bigots do. Of all youthful excesses this is one of the most horrible. The Lord once said: "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me: and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me." You need not insult a begging friar, but give him something, be it ever so little: this charity will bring a great blessing on you. Deride him and God's anger will descend on you. Make fun of no one; do not follow the drunkard nor some poor miserable sot of a woman; feel for all mankind, but for the unfortunate especially. Make it the principle of your life and conduct to protect and help them; be not so cruel as to inflict wilful injuries on others, for you cannot be a friend of God and at the same time at enmity with your

neighbor. Since Our Lord put such importance on the fact of our forgiveness and reconciliation with our friend, it must be that it is a serious matter. Live in peace, in charity, and in love, with your friends. O charity of our neighbor, what a great virtue thou art, when thou art likened to the love of God! Love one another, love your enemies, those that hate you, and those that talk against you. St. John the Apostle thought of nothing in his old age but the love of his neighbor; he always preached the same sermon, "Children, love one another." On every occasion he made the same declaration; so that his disciples said, "Do give us some other sentiment." "No," said St. John, "it is the Lord's doctrine, His special teaching. Love one another, and if you do this you will fulfil the whole law."

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Mark* viii. 1-9. *At that time,* when there was a great multitude *with Jesus,* and they had nothing to eat, calling his disciples together, he saith to them: I have compassion on the multitude: for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat. And if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way: for some of them came from afar off. And his disciples answered him: From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness? And he asked them: How many loaves have ye? who said: Seven, and he commanded the multitude to sit down upon the ground. And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks, he broke, and gave to his disciples to set before them, and they set them before the people. And they had a few little fishes, and he blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them. And they did eat and were filled, and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

THE FEEDING OF FIVE THOUSAND WITH SEVEN LOAVES AND A FEW FISHES.

OUR Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ came down from heaven to take upon Himself our human nature through the motherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary—for our salvation

and to take away our sins. For thirty-three years He prepared Himself for this mission, in silence, prayer, and retirement, in order to preach the glad tidings of the Gospel. As He travelled through the land of Judea, He was always attended by crowds of people, who were attracted by His goodness, His doctrine, and His grace. He healed all manner of sickness, He caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear; the dumb came to Him, and He bade them speak, and their tongues were loosed; the dead were raised to life, and many other things did this great wonder-worker perform in that little country of Judea.

So great was the eagerness with which the people followed Our Lord, that they forgot everything, their food, their rest, and their business, in listening to His eloquence. They forgot to go to their homes, so great was their desire to be instructed by the Saviour. This should be a lesson to us: showing us how we should seek the word of God and listen to it with avidity. But of this I have spoken before: let me now merely remind you that the food of the soul is the word of God; that unless we give it this food the soul will lose its vigor and fall into a mortal sickness. How many are there who are already stricken with this death, and do not know their unhappy state. As Isaias says: "There are those who call evil good, and good, evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." There are some who make a boast of not having heard the word of God for many years. What blindness to boast of this! We hear sermons rarely enough; and when we do hear them, are we attentive? We never learn without attention. The Emperor Constantine had such respect for the word of God that he listened to it standing, and when asked to sit down, he said that holy things should be listened to standing, as did the first Christians in the ages of fervor. Those who will not listen to the word of God with respect and attention are judged by the words of Our Lord Himself, "My brethren are they who hear the word of God."

Our Lord saw this great multitude patiently following Him. He approved of their great desire to hear Him, and calling His disciples together He said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have not what to eat, and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint on the way." Such is the tender heart of Our Lord: not only will He reward fidelity to Him in the next world, but even in this. Hold to Our Lord, therefore, with all faith and confidence. David, the prophet king, cries out, "I have been young, and now am old, and I have not seen the just forsaken nor his seed seeking bread." Fear then the Lord; live good lives, be obedient to His laws, and you will want for nothing.

This beautiful lesson the elder Tobias impressed on the mind of his son. One day he called him and said: "Fear not my son: we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do *that which is* good." Tobias and the Jews were in exile and captivity, were dependent slaves to cruel masters, and still he had such unswerving faith in the goodness of God that not with one word did he complain of that providence that ordered things in this way. And even in a worldly sense this confidence was not disappointed; for an angel became his son's conductor to a far off country, where he was happily married and received a large sum of money for the relief of his necessities.

Our Lord in the tenderness of His heart asked how many loaves of bread there were. A few fishes and seven loaves were all that could be collected. Then He made them sit down on the grass, blessed the loaves, and the disciples distributed them. They multiplied in such a manner in their hands that all had more than enough, and seven baskets were gathered of the fragments. Did you ever, my dear young friends, reflect that this miracle is repeated at all times in this world by almighty God? When the farmer takes the little seed and places it in the ground, it comes up

and multiplies a hundredfold in the crop that is gathered in, and many millions of people are fed by it. This multiplication is not only seen in the seed of the field, but in the multiplication of fishes, of animals, and of men. Of these things we do not take much notice, they are in the ordinary course of the things of this world; but they are not the less wonderful. Be grateful to God for all this, look up to Him, and thank Him for the abundance He has bestowed on us. Consider, too, the innumerable graces that God has been pleased to send us without ceasing; consider the light He pours in upon our souls, the inspirations to our minds; the helps for our spiritual life; the Sacraments, fountains of all blessings, by which He feeds the soul, and especially His sacred body and blood, which is intended by Him as the great food of the soul.

St. Teresa, reflecting on the great benefits Our Lord bestows on man, especially in the sacrament of His divine love, the Holy Eucharist, says, "If you give a bone, which is no longer wanted, to a dog, he will show by his joyful leaps and the wagging of his tail how glad he is for the gift." How grateful should man, then, show himself for God's wonderful kindnesses! Impress deeply on your minds, my dear young people, the gratitude you ought to show to almighty God, and use every means to glorify His goodness.

Once, in the amphitheatre of Rome, a slave was to be torn by a hungry and ferocious lion; when the unfortunate man was placed in the arena, the lion bounded toward him, as if to tear him to pieces. But instead of killing him, the beast crouched down before him, and acted in the most friendly way, because at one time the poor slave had taken a thorn from its paw, and the lion recognized its friend. Tremendous was the applause at this fortunate recognition, and the slave's life was spared. You, having reason, and knowing from whom all good gifts come, show your gratitude like rational beings. God has given you life, has preserved it, has given you health and vigor; He continually protects you

from the many enemies that are threatening you, especially the devil. What has not almighty God done? You ought to open your eyes and consider yourselves the happiest youths in the world, for all the benefits you are enjoying through His goodness, and of which so many others are deprived. You will acknowledge the goodness of God at the judgment-seat. God is like a good king, who took his favorite out of the midst of destruction, and put him in a safe place, whence he could see all, and where he would have him acknowledge that his fate would have been similar had the king permitted him to remain with the others. You will see the millions of wicked sent to hell, while you are going to heaven; by the mercy of God, you have been preserved and placed in safety, where the fire of hell cannot touch you.

Then, indeed, and for all eternity, you will raise your voice in thanksgiving for His interposition in your behalf, "when you shall see the sinner perish."

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* vii. 15-21. *At that time, Jesus said to his disciples:* Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves: By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit: every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not every one that saith to me: "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

A GOOD TREE GIVETH GOOD FRUIT.

"BEWARE of false prophets who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." This will prove an important lesson to our young people, for the young are more easily led: the youth will do anything in

which he finds encouragement, especially if it flatters the senses. Not only did Our Lord warn us against heretics and unbelievers whom He might place first among false prophets and who teach errors to the people, but we can apply these words also to people who are Christians by name only and otherwise are corrupted by bad principles and lead bad lives. These nominal Christians are so well disguised that the wolf appears as a lamb. They are really more to be feared than the devil himself. It is important then to study the ways of these false lambs; you will sometimes see them act in a very holy manner; they go to Mass and consider themselves better than the rest of mankind; their good works are done to secure the praise of men—not for the glory of God; their principles are wrong; they say that the young should have a good time and all liberty should be allowed them; parties, balls, picnics, theatres; in fact, that they must sow their wild oats, and that they will make better men and women if they have been wild. Such talk is nonsensical. Supposing these principles were of general use, where would it all end? and what a dreadful state all young people would be in! These people will say, too, that you are now getting big and are no longer helpless infants, that you have certain rights that every one in authority must respect. Obedience to parents is not so necessary, and blind obedience to the Church and its authority is stupid. They will tell you that your parents are old fogies, with antiquated notions; that in our modern days many things have been changed; that these unbearable old people, with their continual complaints, need not be heeded, for they have neither reason nor common sense on their side.

The Church authorities, too, have no right to search into every action, for they are too strict. These false prophets consider that sin is not so great an evil as it is represented by priests; that it is a little forbidden fun, indeed, but sweeter because stolen; and in this way you are led by degrees into considering your transgressions as light. Instead of

being innocent little angels, you are now experienced in wickedness. These false prophets approach most readily the innocent lambs that have never been corrupted by sin; those who strive to belong to God, and those who are very devout to the Blessed Virgin.

St. Bernard of Siena was a very amiable character, and of most agreeable manners; some wicked companions tried to persuade him to do wrong, and thus lose the great treasure of the grace of God; but the holy youth soon noticed it, and with tears in his eyes he begged God's pardon; and he was on his guard for the future.

Not only be on your guard against those who are covered with sheep's clothing—go further than that even; be on your guard against bad Christians who do not assume any disguise, but appear to be as bad as they can; their principle is, that those who do not know how to enjoy the world, or are afraid to enjoy it, are really to be pitied.

There once lived in Lancaster, England, a young man of a noble and virtuous family, who was well brought up and well educated; as long as he was a pure boy, he was good; but as he advanced in years and in his classes, he came in contact with bigger boys, who were unrestrained in their language and bold in their intercourse with others. Their manners seemed to our young hero to be the very perfection of manhood; he lost all taste for quietness and modesty, from mere talk he went further and committed acts of uncleanness, at first with qualms of conscience, but in a short time he was known as one of the worst in that neighborhood. Such things happen every day, and this is the way in which they begin.

So far I have considered you innocent lambs, which I hope you are, and will always remain; for that reason I have repeatedly cried out, "Be on your guard against the cruel wolves who appear in sheep's clothing." But may there not be such wolves among you? What can I say to you, miserable beings, who have taken upon yourselves the office of the devil

and seek to ruin souls? "You have your father the devil, and you do the will of your father the devil, who was a murderer of souls from the beginning." How great is the crime of which you are guilty! Had you taken the life of the body, what a monster you would be; but you have done a great deal worse—you have ruined a soul and sent it to hell. Let me continue the picture: suppose that in your fury against all good people, you should arm yourself with a dagger, and on Sunday, coming to church, plunge it into the heart of a young man who has just received holy communion; it would be a horrible crime, but what harm would you do his soul? None that we can see, for his soul would go to heaven, with Jesus in its bosom. But, on the contrary, suppose the wicked young fellow accosted this pious youth after communion, and led him into sin, with Our Lord in his heart—what harm would he then do? A great and terrible harm, for he would then be the occasion of the spiritual death of this youth. How terrible would be the curses of this unhappy boy, suffering in the fire of hell, against his wicked seducer, nor would he cease to utter them for all eternity.

The sin of scandal is for that reason so awful, because its consequences continue for all time. "Wo to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come: but nevertheless wo to that man by whom the scandal cometh. But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea."

They who give scandal may expect the most tremendous chastisements of God, unless they make reparation in time. The person who reflects seriously on this would be inclined to fly from the world and hide himself in prayer in a desert, like St. Benedict, who, while young and pursuing his studies, saw the danger, and preferring to be ignorant and virtuous, rather than to be learned and wicked, began with thirty companions to lead a monastic life.

How are sins and vices propagated? They certainly do not all come from a corrupt heart. No; the heart is corrupted by exterior influences and circumstances, through scandal. These wolves in sheep's clothing cause it.

But supposing you have been guilty of scandal, how are you to rectify it? You must make reparation. Let me give you an example of a woman who had given scandal. The young man whom she had led astray was murdered at the very door of her house. "What a miserable creature I am," she said. "This blood cries against me for vengeance. I will go and do such public and severe penance that every one will be edified."

It is very easy to give scandal; a bad word, an act or a gesture may suffice to encourage others to fall into sin. Then do not think lightly of your exterior conduct; regulate it and watch over it with such solicitude that you will not lead others into sin or into the ways of a careless life. "Every tree that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." "Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." And certainly it is not doing the will of God to ruin souls. If you have given scandal, pray fervently at the foot of the cross and do penance all your life. This the holy King David did, after his great fall into sin: "I will teach the unjust Thy ways, and the wicked shall be converted to Thee."

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Gospel. *Luke* xvi. 1-9. *At that time, Jesus spoke to his disciples this parable:* There was a certain rich man who had a steward: and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said to him: How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship: for now thou canst be steward no longer. And the steward said within himself: What shall I do, because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am

not able, to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I shall be removed from the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. Therefore calling together every one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first: How much dost thou owe my lord? But he said: An hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him: Take thy bill and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another: And how much dost thou owe? Who said: A hundred quarters of wheat. He said to him: Take thy bill and write eighty. And the lord commended the unjust steward, forasmuch as he had done wisely: for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say to you: Make friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.

THE DISHONEST BUT WISE STEWARD.

It was the custom of Our Lord to speak in parables to His dear disciples and the Apostles. "And without parables He did not speak to them," as we read in the Gospels. It is an easy way of giving instruction, and makes a deep impression on the mind.

Who is that rich man and who is the steward? God is the rich man, who possesses the whole earth, and the fulness thereof. That unjust steward is the man to whom God's wealth is committed for administration; God is then the master of all, rich in all things, powerful because He can do all things; all that is on this earth He has given, for man's use, and besides He has given us many other gifts and graces; in short, all that we have comes to us from God. What have we of ourselves? Be not so foolish as to imagine that anything about your body or your soul comes from any other source than from God's generosity. Would it not then be natural that we should use all things for God's glory? But what are the facts? We misuse the gifts of God, we abuse our bodies; for, finding ourselves strong and healthy, we delight in committing sin. We abuse the gifts of the tongue, for we say bad words; we even curse and blaspheme the name of God. We abuse our sight by looking on objects that stir

up concupiscence; we abuse our hands by thefts, by injuring our neighbor; we abuse our memory, which is frequently the willing receptacle of all past wickedness; we abuse our intellect by learning more and more of the ways of committing sin; we abuse our will by desiring that which is evil, "the soul of the wicked desireth evil."

My dear young people, appreciate the gifts of God in this life, for a time will come when you shall have to give an account of the use you have made of these gifts and graces.

This rich lord had heard that the steward or manager of his property was throwing it away. He became angry, he called him to him and said, "How is it that I hear this of thee? Bring your account books to me, that I may look into them, for I will not allow this squandering, and you shall not be my manager any longer." God will call us before Him at the hour of our death and an account will be exacted from us of all our life. Every one must die, every one must make this accounting. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." Follow me now in what I am going to say. Set aside for a while that lightness of mind which is the mood of the young especially, and think seriously for a few moments. There will be great pain and torment when you will have to leave in death all that you have in this world, parents, friends, and riches: but it will be harder to appear before Jesus Christ the Judge. There we shall stand before that throne, without friends, without father or mother to excuse us; without companions, without help or encouragement, before a most just Judge, who, without regard to persons, will be most exact in His demands of justice. "I will judge thee according to thy ways."

At that dreadful moment we shall not be altogether alone; two angels will be at our side; the good angel, our guardian angel, and the bad one, the demon. These have been struggling for possession of our soul all our life, and now they stand at the judgment-seat of God with us until they hear what God's decision will be; and in the company of the

one or the other we will go to the place assigned for us by God's judgment. If we died in the grace of God, the good angel will stand beside us, bright and triumphant; if on the contrary our life has been bad, the demon prepares to take us with him into the place of eternal torture. "Give an account of your stewardship," says Our Lord. I have created you that you may love Me and serve Me faithfully, but no sooner did you come to the use of reason, when you should have known Me, than you turned your back on Me, and waged an implacable war against Me. Now give an account of all the bad thoughts you have entertained during your lifetime, of the lustful glances, of the many bad words. What evil deeds have you done in public and in secret; give an account of those acts of disobedience to your superiors.

"These things have you done and I have been silent." Give an account of the Sundays and feasts of the Church desecrated by hardly hearing a Mass, that you passed in looking for pleasures, never thinking of God. You did not hear the word of God. What scandals have you given! Give an account of the souls you sent to hell by your bad example and your bad advice. What good could you not have done, and you were so neglectful as to do nothing. You had time, and threw it away in pleasures and amusements; whole days were spent at play with your companions; many hours of day and night were passed reading books, novels good and bad, but you could not find time for a short prayer. Up in the morning and to bed at night without a thought of God. Yes, give an account of the many means of salvation which I gave you. I instituted for you the Sacraments, which are intended for every station in life. I left you My most precious body and blood in the Blessed Sacrament, to be a food to your soul, to strengthen you in the journey of life. You neglected to receive it, or you received it unworthily, and consequently My graces and benefits were thrown away on you. For you, I descended from heaven, became a child, and was laid in a manger in extreme poverty; for you I was

persecuted by the Jews, apprehended by them, delivered unto death, crowned with thorns, scourged, nailed to a cross where I shed the last drops of My blood for your redemption: "You thought that, like you, I was silent." All these gifts you have abused; they were pearls thrown before the sinner and you trod them under foot and despised them.

Remember the day will come when you will have to give an account; it may be very close at hand, it may be in a short time, this year or the next. If God should call you to Him to give this account of yourself, would you be ready, and would you go gladly because you knew everything was in order? Many, yes, all of us, would beg for a little respite, in which we might redouble our efforts to get ready, still to do a little good and to repair the evil which we have committed. St. Bridget was told by an angel that in three days she would die, and she began to cry. "Three days!" she said. "Only three days to prepare for eternity? O, at least a year." And this is the case of a saint.

But if you, my young friends, knew that now or in three days you would die, what dread would come over you at your want of preparation! and if you had but these three days, would you not spend them in prayer? The man who is condemned to die does nothing but pray before his execution; the priest is constantly with him, so as to keep his mind on holy subjects. Under such circumstances you, too, would think only of holy things; you would fast and do severe penance, you would give away all that you had to the poor, in order to be prepared to go to the other world.

But since you know neither the day nor the hour when you will have to appear before God, live as you would if you had only a few moments to prepare. "Thinkest thou this, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" How foolish is such bold presumption! The thought of the judgment peopled the deserts with anchorites and penitents. Even great saints trembled at the thought. Holy King David trembled at the judgments of God, as we

see frequently in his psalms. "O Lord, enter not into judgment with Thy servant," he said, and punished his body with fasting and severe penance, "Until his flesh was changed." St. Hilarion, a very severe penitent, coming to the hour of his death, had great fear, but he spoke to his soul: "Soul, have courage; you have served the Lord for seventy years in the desert and you still fear?" St. Jerome thus wrote: "When I recall the thought of the terrible judgment which shall be passed on me at my death, I look with terror around my rocky cell in the desert, and it appears to me as if every stone would speak against me, and would hurl itself down on me." St. Jerome prayed day and night in a most lonesome desert and still he feared the last judgment. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi after forty years spent in her baptismal innocence, asked her confessor with a trembling voice: "Father," she said, "do you think I will be saved?" What fear will not those experience who from their tender years have committed sin? "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God." None will feel this more than those who feel the weight of their sins.

When you fall into the hands of the great Judge, there will be no chance to escape. The unjust steward, it is true, found means to put himself out of the danger of starvation by smart entries in his account book. The sinner will not be able to do this. Our Lord praised the ingenuity of the steward, for He said: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Because we have so much care for the goods of this world, while for the soul we have no care. We know that to escape the consequences of an adverse judgment, we must observe all the laws of God, for "whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." We break all the laws of the Decalogue, and we are unmoved, because we do not realize the gravity of our act; at the same time we know that one wilful, impure thought is a mortal sin and sufficient to condemn us to hell, though certainly a thought is of little importance.

What matters it if we eat meat on a day on which it is forbidden? What if we satisfy the demands of our passions? These things are serious; think how terrible it is to fall into the hands of the living God! The efficacy of prayer will then be at an end; no one can put in a plea for us. Now it is easy to conciliate the just Judge by a good act of penance, by a good thought, by a holy aspiration; we can make Him our friend now. How precious then are our present moments, when by so slight an act we can gain heaven, by such slight repentance obtain the forgiveness of our sins! Use them then with the greatest care, and be as greedy of the treasures of heaven as the miser is avaricious of his money. St. Francis had a revelation of his predestination, and by it was so overcome with joy that he nearly died. What will be your joy when you shall enter into the realms of the blessed?

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Luke* xix, 41-47. *At that time:* When Jesus drew near Jerusalem, seeing the city, he wept over it saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round: and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone: because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation. And entering into the temple, he began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, saying to them: It is written: My house is the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves. And he was teaching daily in the temple.

JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM.

THE time was near at hand when the Saviour of the world was to suffer for mankind: when the occurrences took place which are related in the gospel of this day. Our Lord was

coming from Bethany and going to Jerusalem; He was to suffer the death of the cross for fallen man.

The news soon spread through the city that Jesus, the great prophet, was about to enter the town, and great was the stir that this news produced. The people came in crowds to the city gates; with palm branches in their hands they met Him, and cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." And wherever He passed they spread a carpet of trees, green leaves, and flowers; they even spread their garments on the ground that He might walk on them. Everything and everybody had put on a festive appearance, and great joy was manifested by all at this public entry into Jerusalem. But, wonderful to relate, Our Lord was not filled with joy at this triumphal entry. He was sad; tears fell from His eyes. Why was this? Because He saw that in a few days this very multitude of people would reject Him; now they believed in Him, but soon they would lose their faith and cry out for His crucifixion. He remembered the many miracles He had wrought, the many kindnesses and graces He had bestowed on them, and the black ingratitude they gave Him in return for all He had done; and this came so vividly to His mind that He wept over the city.

Just as Jesus wept over that ungrateful city of Jerusalem, is He pressed to weep over many Christians, and over the growing generation of young people. Can it be that there are people who make Jesus weep over them? Yes, indeed, and many even among us grown people; we are so easily led astray that the sufferings of Our Lord count as nothing to us. There are many who care nothing for His graces and favors, who disregard, outrage, and offend Him. Who is there that has not committed sin? And if you have sinned you are the cause of the tears of Our Lord; and if you have sinned often, so often have you made Him say: "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised Me." I have brought up children and given them so many manifestations

of My goodness both in the spiritual and natural order, and now that they have grown up they refuse to serve Me; they are worse than the children of infidels. They are the children of the Church, fed by the Bread of angels, and yet they have all the vices of those that are totally ignorant of Me. The old bishop, St. Polycarp, was accused at the tribunal of the proconsul of being a follower of Christ; and neither by prayers nor threats could his persecutors make him deny his faith. Finally the Proconsul proposed that if Polycarp would pretend to blaspheme the name of Jesus, he should not only be allowed to go back to his see, but there should also be heaped on him honors and riches. To this the old bishop answered: "Eighty-six years have I served the Lord, and during all that time He never did me any wrong; on the contrary He has shown me many favors. Is it reasonable that I should deny my Lord?" In the meantime the stake at which he was bound was set on fire, and Polycarp, full of joy, died a martyr's death.

You ought to do the same thing; when the occasion of sin presents itself, you, too, ought to say, "God has never done me any injury; on the contrary He has heaped on me many benefits; how can I be so ungrateful as to disobey Him?"

Our Lord and Redeemer, with tears in His eyes, said of the Jews: "O Jerusalem, if thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes!" Indeed the Jews did not know the graces which Our Lord had offered them. He offered them conversion, but by their own fault and malice they refused to listen to Him.

By miracles, by prophecies, and by His own words proved from the Old Testament, Our Lord demonstrated that He was the promised Redeemer; but the Jews did not want to know it and closed their eyes to all evidence. This made them unworthy of any extraordinary graces by which their eyes might be opened to the truth. The same thing happens to us when we obstinately refuse grace. "They have eyes

and see not, ears and hear not." We abuse the graces given to us, and it is our own fault if we are abandoned to our obstinacy and self-will. When the sinner falls into this dreadful state by his own fault, he makes no effort to arouse himself from his fatal sleep. The ministers of God try to bring him to his senses by prayer, by preaching, by kind and loving threats of the eternal punishment, of the Last Judgment, but he remains obstinate; friends and parents will give advice, but all to no purpose. His heart is hardened. Salutary punishments come upon him in this life, sickness, troubles, mishaps of all kinds, but he will not see that they are meant as graces. Almighty God, seeing that all chastisements and blandishments are in vain, will say, "I have ordered your destruction because you have not profited by My visitation. 'Thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.' From henceforth I abandon you, no more will you feel My kind reprimands, no more will light be sent to you, you will fall deeper and deeper; you will die in your obstinacy and come before My judgment-seat, when you will hear Me condemn you to everlasting torment."

Have a care, my dear young friends, not to deserve this severe sentence. Jerusalem was a city dear to Our Lord. What a fair city, a picture of the heavenly Jerusalem, would she have been, prominent on the beautiful hills of Palestine, had she acknowledged the Lord! "What should I have done for My vineyard, and I have not done it?" Yes, the greater the graces which God has bestowed on you, the greater should be your efforts to correspond to them. You have been like favorite children, who have received many kindnesses; but you disobeyed God and defiled your sacred bodies by abominable sins. Could not Our Lord say, "If youths less favored than you had done this, I should not wonder, but that you, after so much kindness, should do it, I will not overlook."

When the sinner is thus abandoned by God, the same dreadful ruin will happen to him as was foretold of Jerusalem: "For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall

cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round: and straiten thee on every side: and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone."

Voices were heard in the Temple, shortly before its destruction, "Let us go away from here, let us leave this place." The angels shall fly; the devils will gather about in numbers; then will be terror and fear of what is to come. The sinner will cry out for mercy, but the Lord will no longer listen to his lamentation. His cries do not proceed from a penitent heart, but from the anguish of despair. Did not almighty God give you sufficient caution all your lifetime, did He not say that He would let you die in sin? The hour has now arrived. Hear Him say: "For a long time you did not think of Me, neither will I turn My thoughts on thee: I leave you now in the power of Satan, to whom you have given your body and soul, and whose bidding you were so anxious to do."

If you are in the state of mortal sin, be converted, turn not a deaf ear on God. "Now is the time of your salvation. This may perhaps be your last chance. You have been deaf to God through your life, and God will be deaf to you at your death." This was the salute which a saint gave to a great sinner whom he met; he had often tried to convert him, but all in vain, and these were the last words he spoke to him.

When Our Lord came into Jerusalem on the day of His triumphal entry He went directly to the Temple to preach to those who had welcomed Him. When He reached there He found a great bustle going on; people were buying and selling in this place consecrated exclusively to the worship of God. Our Lord was angry and, making a scourge of ropes, He chased the wretches from the Temple, saying: "My house is the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves." Our Lord appeared severe to all who saw Him, but He wished to impress on their minds a very salutary lesson: scrupulous respect for the house of God. The good Jesus, who on all occasions was so mild and so meek, that He said of Himself,

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart," was indignant. The zeal of the Lord glowed in His soul and He arose in His might and chased the buyers and sellers from the sacred place. Should Our Lord come personally into our churches, what would be His conduct toward some of us, my dear young friends? He would there find His wrath rising within Him, and would chastise those whom He found there; or drive out of the house of God young people who, instead of praying, talk, laugh, and ridicule their neighbors. The house of God is the house of prayer, and should not be used in any other way. Remember what St. Paul says: "If any man violates the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

Let us learn, then, from this severe act of Our Lord how necessary is respect for the place of His habitation on earth. Enter with faith, keeping vividly before your mind that Christ is really present; that this is the great palace of the King of heaven and earth, and that if we would behave in a respectful manner in the palaces of the great of this world, so we should also act, but with more seriousness, in the house of God. Enter it with fear and trembling, for God is there and naturally you should fall on your face in prayer and adoration; enter it as the angels would, who come before the face of Jesus with a fervent love for Him.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Luke* xviii. 9-14. *At that time:* To some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others, Jesus spoke this parable: Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee, standing, prayed thus with himself: O God! I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men: extortioners, unjust, adulterers: as also is this publican; I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven: but struck his breast, saying: O God! be merciful to me a sinner! I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other, because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

THE CONDUCT OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN IN THE TEMPLE.

Our Lord, after having spoken of faith and prayer, addressed Himself to those who thought themselves good and just, telling them the parable of the Pharisee and publican in the Temple. Two men went to the Temple to pray: one was a Pharisee, a proud man, who thought he had always done great things, who was puffed up with his good deeds and boasted of them even to God Himself. The Pharisee asked for nothing, but took all the glory to himself. He stood upright, head erect, and facing the altar, full of pride, he prayed in this manner: "O God," he said, "I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men: extortioners, unjust, adulterers: as also is this publican; I fast twice in a week: I give tithes of all that I possess."

What did he pray for? Really, nothing; he came to pray, but he broke out in praise of himself. May not this Pharisee be a picture of ourselves? May there not be also some Pharisees among us, my dear young friends? Are there not many who go to church to pray, but forget for what they are there? Ask that young man when he comes out of the church what favors he has asked of God at this most precious time of public prayer. You have been present at Mass, you have recited some prayers, but you did not think of what you were doing. St. Augustine says: "How can you expect that God will attend to your prayers when you do not think of them yourself?"

Young people are very apt to enter a church just as the Pharisee did, as if they were going to a place of amusement; their genuflection is a careless jump before the Blessed Sacrament, their heads are raised, their eyes are wandering and in a few minutes they will be able to tell who is present; they notice who comes into the church, and who goes out, and all this while the holy sacrifice of the Mass is being offered. It is almost impossible to believe it: they are disrespectful here

in their exterior deportment, but they would know very well how to behave in company or in the presence of some great one of the world. But many come to church to do worse than the Pharisee: they come to laugh, to talk, and to disturb others who wish to pray; they come to commit sin and make others commit it. The Apostle Paul cried out with zeal, "Have you not your homes, or do you despise the church of God?" as if he wanted to say, have you not places where you can talk and laugh, need you come to the house of God to do this? No good pastor can look at this without concern; he will not allow you to talk, he will step in at once with a reprimand or send you out of church as a punishment. "My house is the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves," he would say, using the words of Our Lord when He drove the desecrators out of the Temple. The pagans shame us in this regard; they go to the temple of their false gods with reverence and respect; the Mohammedan never goes into his mosque without taking off his shoes at the entrance and washing his feet as a sign of respect. These idolaters worship false gods made of wood, stone or metal, but with such respect that our outward show of piety and devotion, in many cases, is inferior to theirs.

Almighty God, who is thus carelessly treated by His worshippers, will not let such conduct pass unpunished. St. Chrysostom says that the reason of many of our calamities, wars, and famines, is because our churches are not held in sufficient respect, and kept exclusively for the purposes of prayer. Even Socrates, the pagan philosopher, asserts that the desecration of the temple is a sign of the anger of God, and foreshadows great calamities that are about to come upon the nation. The first Christians considered the churches heaven itself: here they came sprinkled with ashes, clothed in sackcloth, with a rope around their waist and humbly kissed the feet of the priest: not only did the common people do this, but even tyrants and kings.

The Emperor Theodosius entered the cathedral of Milan in

a poor garment, and when he came to the threshold fell flat on his face, repeating the words of the psalm: "I have been humbled, O Lord, exceedingly; quicken Thou me according to Thy word." He remained in that attitude during the sacred functions.

St. Gregory of Nazianzen writes of his mother that she was so recollected in church that she never sat down, never spoke, never turned her back to the Blessed Sacrament.

These examples show that in former times great outward respect was shown in church. I will not ask you to come to church covered with ashes or dressed in sackcloth; but when you are there assume a respectful posture and ask God to pardon your sins.

Now let us go back to the Gospel; the Pharisee said, "I give Thee thanks that I am not like the rest of men." What pride, what blindness this is! In reality this Pharisee was an impudent sinner. Here he was, in the presence of this great healer of the human race, standing before God with his soul stained by this dreadful malady of pride, yet he utters not a word to ask for help in the sickness of his soul. He should have opened his heart to God in groans and lamentations; he should have recognized the meanness of this vice, and begged of God the grace to overcome it; but the Pharisee never thought he was sinfully proud; that all the good in him was changed into wickedness by this vice.

We sometimes feel about the same way, for how often do we hear as an excuse for the want of religion, "I do not steal, nor curse, nor get drunk. I do no man any injury." Supposing you are all that you say, are you therefore free from sin? Are not the bad conversations held with your companions, sins? Are not bad thoughts which kill the soul, sins?

I am ready to believe, my young friends, that you are not guilty of great sins, but even so, can you say, "I thank God, I am not like those other young men." Just reflect for a moment; supposing you are not guilty of grave faults ought you on that account be proud? You know well enough that

you lack much as followers of Jesus Christ. You commit many venial sins; you know you tell many little lies; you are frequently disobedient; you have very little devotion, very little respect for God in church; you are careless at your prayers, and by these smaller sins, instead of advancing in the path of virtue, you are going back. Again, you say with some pride, we are not as bad as others, for we have not committed great crimes.

If, my dear young people, by a special grace of God you have not, up to the present, fallen into certain great sins, yet if you continue in your cold way, you will in the course of years certainly fall into them. If pride is your governing vice, you will certainly come to a great fall, for it is the punishment of pride to descend into the most abject humiliation.

In the lives of the Fathers, we read of a monk who lived a long time in the desert, doing great penance and practicing many virtues; but somehow he had not that humility which a holy man ought to possess. Almighty God wished to save him and so, to humble him, He sent him a temptation and the monk fell.

Instead of keeping your eyes on the wicked so that you may say, "Thank God, I am not so bad as to be capable of doing that," keep your eyes on young people who are virtuous and exemplary, and ask yourself why you are not as good as they are. These people are devout in church, they frequent the Sacraments, hear the word of God, are obedient to their superiors, patient, mild, polite and modest in thought, word and action. Am I like them? Remember you must acquire all the virtues of the good if you would be good yourself. Even supposing you are doing very well, that you appear to walk in the path of virtue, you cannot consider yourself perfect, and you cannot thank God that you are better than others; for after all you are only like a servant who has merely done his duty and is not worthy of special commendation for that.

Athens was a great school of philosophy and many students

flocked to it. In the first years the Athenian student boasted that he knew everything; some years later on he felt that he knew but little, and finally, compared to what he ought to know, he admitted that he knew nothing. It used to be said at that time that the student who had reached that pitch of philosophy was the one most applauded for his success.

Solon, the Gentile philosopher, held this principle: "Of this," said he, "I am sure, that I know nothing." I think the same holds true of virtue; the greater opinion we have of our virtue the less we have of it. "When you have done all that is required of you, say you are useless servants."

We have said enough of the proud Pharisee; let us now consider the publican. Who is that at the farthest end of the church? Why does he not come up and approach the altar? It is the poor, penitent publican. There he stands, beating his breast with shame, and with tearful eyes raised to heaven, cries, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." Yes, truly he was a sinner; but he acknowledged himself as such, he bewailed his sins and received pardon for them at once. We ought to have that same feeling, that we are sinners; we should acknowledge that we are not fit to stand before God in His holy place. Let us with sorrow confess our sins to a priest and say, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." Make a good examination of conscience, that your sorrow may extend to all your faults, none forgotten and none concealed. Make up your mind firmly that you will hate these sins in the future; turn your eyes to the Heart of Jesus, and pray to Him that He, your Judge, may forgive you. "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." And when you rise from the feet of the priest, you will hear the sweet words, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace and sin no more."

St. Francis de Sales says, "When you go to confession, imagine you stand with your sins beneath the cross, that drops of blood are falling on your soul from the wounds of the dying Lord, washing away every stain of sin."

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Mark* vii. 31-37. *At that time:* Jesus going out of the coasts of Tyre, came by Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring to him one deaf and dumb: and they besought him that he would lay his hand upon him. And taking him from the multitude apart, he put his fingers into his ears, and spitting, he touched his tongue: and looking up to heaven, he groaned, and said to him: Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right. And he charged them that they should tell no man. But the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal did they publish it: and so much the more did they wonder, saying: He hath done all things well; he hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

THE HEALING OF THE DEAF-MUTE.

OUR Lord was considered in His time the merciful healer of all human infirmities. We read in this Gospel that a deaf-mute was offered to Him for cure. The deaf-mute is considered a figure of the sinner. When the sinner falls into a great sin, and especially when he relapses often, and becomes habituated to it, he grows deaf to the voice of Our Lord, who is anxious that he be freed from his spiritual infirmities, and mute in declaring his trouble to the one who could cure him. Our Lord is impatient at this sick man, because he will do nothing for himself and will not co-operate with grace, and so menaces him with the terrible chastisements, which often come to great sinners; but all these threats are in vain. There are many such deaf-mutes, many obstinate sinners among our young people, and the words of the ancient prophet can be put into their mouths: "Depart from us, O God, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways."

In the life of St. Martin there is told a story about blind people that may be very applicable in cases of spiritual blindness. A number of blind men who were accustomed to gather near a church to beg were laying their plans how best to

succeed, and they pointed out to one another the posts they were to occupy. After a while they heard that the Bishop was coming, whereat they all scampered off, lest they should be cured, for St. Martin was a great worker of miracles. They all were blind, and made a good living by exhibiting their infirmity and poverty. The point of the story is this: that our young people who are spiritually blind do not want to be cured, and they are very much afraid lest some good, pious person will cause them to be converted. It is singular that hateful as sin is, abominable, mean, low, filthy, there are people who become fond of it, and will fly from anything that is good or likely to bring them to God. They fly from church, from good people, from prayer, from every act of mortification. They cling to sin; they love sin for its own sake, and for the pleasure they derive from it; they love intemperance on account of the pleasure of gluttony; love impurity for the satisfaction of their passions, their senses and imaginations. They wish to sleep the sleep of sin, and will not be wakened out of it. Not only is the poor sinner deaf, but he is also dumb, since he does not speak, either because he cannot or because he will not. In nature dumbness comes as a natural consequence of deafness, because where the person is deaf and cannot hear his own voice, there is no incentive to talk, which after a while induces such absolute silence that a deaf person eventually loses the faculty of speech, though he still has the power of speech. In the spiritual life one malady is the consequence of the other. In a similar manner David the prophet seems to indicate this, for he connects both maladies very closely, saying: "But I, as a deaf man, heard not, and as a dumb man, not opening his mouth."

It is certainly a most unhappy state to feel the need of calling upon Our Lord for help, and of looking for the pardon of our sins, and not be able to do it. Among the young there are many who do not pray to God at all; days and months, yes, years pass, and not a thought of prayer; they never pray

to those who could intercede for them; they do not pray to St. Joseph, the Blessed Virgin, or to their patron saints. They are mute, too, as regards confession. Jesus Christ instituted confession, and we must go and declare our sins to a priest if we want to obtain their pardon. Every Catholic knows the belief of the Church as regards the Sacrament of Confession; but with all this knowledge, how many there are who are afraid of confession, who will not open their mouths to the priest. They know how easy it is to obtain pardon of their sins through this sacrament, and still they will not make use of it. They conceal their sins through shame; it is true they confess their lighter offences, little faults, little lies, small disobediences, and other things of this kind as if they were saints with no great faults, but anything shameful, blasphemies and impurities especially, they pass over. Poor deluded sinner, you can hide your sins now, but on the Day of Judgment the dreadful hour will come when, besides these sins, your sacrileges will be laid before the whole world.

My dear young friends, if at any time you should have had the misfortune of falling into a great sin, let shame indeed come over your soul for its misery; but oh, hasten with sorrow to the feet of your confessor and there, with the blush of shame, but humbly and candidly, lay bare your conscience and receive absolution. Do not think that in that horrible state of sin anything will take the place of confession; prayers, fasts or alms will not obtain remission of your sins; nothing will, except that confession with true sorrow and a resolution to do better.

In the life of St. Benedict, we read of a certain young man of good birth and education and of a virtuous character, who, having lost his parents by death, resolved to leave the world. He sold all his goods and gave the money to the poor, and then sought a hermitage where he could lead a holy life. He built himself a small chapel, and in it placed an altar before which he prayed day and night, so that in a short time he was considered a saint. The devil, envying the youth his ad-

vancement in virtue, set about ruining him, and began by attacking him with horrible temptations. The youth vanquished him by prayer, but one day he was a little careless about his prayers. That was the devil's opportunity; again he tempted the youth and this time succeeded in exciting in him impure desires to which he consented. Quickly he came to himself, however: with groans he threw himself on the floor of his little chapel and cried out: "O Pelagius, what a great fall was this; from heaven to hell; a little while ago a child of God, brother of Jesus Christ, now a slave of Satan, a brother of devils. By thus consenting to wickedness you have lost all the merit of your good actions. How will you get out of this? If you go to confession your sin will be known, and you will lose the esteem of all." Angry at himself, he disciplined his body until blood came, thinking he could by this means receive pardon from God. But he never gained the peace of mind which comes after a sincere confession. Even on his death-bed he could not bring himself to confess, for those who close their mouths on their sins in life will not find their tongues in the hour of death. So he died in his sin and is probably now suffering in hell.

The prophet David tells us: "I have acknowledged my sin to Thee and my injustice I have not concealed." And in this way we, too, must say: "Lord, I have confessed my sin sincerely, and the consolation of Thy forgiveness has filled my heart." You can indeed easily obtain the pardon of your sins if you confess them sincerely; you can drag yourselves out of hell fire, from the already blazing pile, by a sincere acknowledgment of your particular sins. There is no doubt that there are millions in heaven just because they confessed the sins which would have sent them to hell. Mary Magdalen must have been ashamed when she anointed the feet and head of Our Lord; she heard the declaration of the Pharisees that she was a bad woman, but her public confession obtained her forgiveness. In "The Confessions of St. Augustine," a

book which is in many libraries, we find that he committed many sins.

When the deaf man was brought to Our Lord, He placed His fingers in the man's ears, and moistened them with spittle; then raising His eyes to heaven, He said with a sigh: "Be opened!" When this had been done the man's ears were opened and the strings of his tongue were loosed. In every case at our Baptism, this very ceremony is performed by the priest, to teach us that we should have our ears open to hear the word of God, but to close them to wickedness.

My dear young friends, do we generally keep our ears closed to bad conversation? There is much pleasure in a hearty laugh, or whatever may excite it, especially if the subject be a little spicy, as it is lightly called. This listening to evil communications is very common among all classes of people, but especially the young; in the factory where boys and girls work near one another, horrid things are said that should bring a blush to the cheek of an innocent girl; in the streets impure jokes are heard daily. Full grown men at public works guile away the hours of hard labor by filthy talk, and who is there among them courageous enough to put a stop to such—to call upon the promoters to refrain or to change the subject? When St. Aloysius Gonzaga once heard an old man use some very improper words in the hearing of young men of the court, the saint arose and said: "Are you, an old man, not ashamed to utter such words before youths? You ought to be better disposed and teach them what is good instead of scandalizing them."

St. Paul says that: "Evil communications corrupt good manners." St. Bernardine of Siena was once walking with a companion who made a nasty remark, whereupon the saint turned on him and gave him a smart slap in the face, saying: "Such a nasty remark can not be allowed to pass without showing my disapproval."

What remedy, my dear young people, is there for bad conversation? The good Jesus once touched with His holy hands

the tongue of a dumb man and he was entirely cured. Do this by often going to communion with the intention that the body of the Lord may touch your tongue and cure that member of all its wickedness and purify it; the efficacy of one communion is indeed great to that end. The flesh of the Immaculate Lamb will purify your heart, from which proceed evil thoughts and bad desires. Noble minds, minds that are not continually bent on the satisfaction of the passions, are beyond such lowness. You may be sure that those who continually talk of impurity, do so from the fulness of the heart, and sooner or later they will advance from words to the fulness of wickedness and indulge in that vice.

When Our Lord had performed the miracle apart from the crowd, He brought the man back to those who had conducted him thither, and told them not to tell of the miracle to others. But they were so enthusiastic over it that they went about speaking loudly of it and praising God, for they said: "He hath done all things well, He hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." Let us reflect on these words: "He hath done all things well." We, too, should do all our actions well, and certainly the best means to progress in virtue is day by day to perform in a commendable manner all the duties of our station in life. When we pray or when we meditate let us do it well; let us be recollected before God. Pray with devotion, pour out our hearts in His presence, expose our necessities to Him and ask His help. Let us assist at Mass with the sentiments we would have had were we standing beneath the cross on Calvary, and looking at the crucifixion and the death of Our Lord.

When we say the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, if we practice any devotion in her honor, let us approach the throne of this good Mother as her beloved children should approach her—give ourselves up to her with unbounded confidence. When we go to confession let us remember that we are about to cleanse our souls in the blood of Christ; and let us make our confession with profound humility, with clearness, sincer-

ity and interior compunction. Let us draw great fruit from it for the correction of our life. When we go to communion what an effort should we make to dispose ourselves properly, with love, for Jesus unites our soul with His, our heart with His. Let us adore Him, praise Him; ask for graces for ourselves, for our parents, relatives and superiors, for the souls in purgatory. When we go to our studies, or to our work, let us offer our labors to God. In the morning let us beg of Him to bless all the actions of the day, as St. Paul tells us: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God." In this way we shall advance in virtue and acquire great treasures for heaven, and with good cause may it also be said of us: "'He hath done all things well," and God certainly will reward us for it, for let us remember what a welcome the servant received when he came back to the Master: "Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things I will place thee over many things." Never let us act from other motives than the love and glory of God; not from vain glory, because that is pride, nor for our own pleasure, because that is selfishness and God does not reward in heaven such actions, though they may be glorious in the eyes of the world and monuments may be erected to commemorate them.

"Vainglory is a real pest," says St. Thomas à Kempis.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Luke* x. 23-37. *At that time Jesus said to his disciples:* Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see. For I say to you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them. And behold a certain lawyer stood up, tempting him, saying: Master, what must I do to possess eternal life? But he said to him: What is written in the law? how readest thou? He answering, said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said to him: Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou

shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said to Jesus: And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering, said: A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him: and, having wounded him, went away leaving him half dead. And it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way: and seeing him, passed by. In like manner also a levite, when he was near the place and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan being on his journey came near him: and seeing him, was moved with compassion. And going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine: and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two pence, and gave it to the host, and said: Take care of him: and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I at my return will repay thee. Which of these three in thy opinion was neighbor to him that fell among the robbers? But he said: He that showed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him: Go and do thou in like manner.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

THE Gospel of this day is full of instruction, and could be divided into many and interesting subjects, for it treats of very important affairs.

Our Lord called those blessed who had seen the great events of His day: His birth, His preaching, His miracles. Those were really beautiful days which all the religious world, from the time of Adam and Eve, had expected and were waiting for; they sighed for them, prepared themselves for them, and day after day they expected the realization of the promises of God. The prophets of old spoke of those days, and in some cases described very vividly and exactly the Messias. How their imagination must have been stirred to the sublimest pitch when they thought of the loving closeness of God to man, when the Son of God should come down from heaven! We envy the apostles and disciples of Christ. Although we have the same privileges they had, we would love to have seen the things which they saw and heard the things which they heard. But we, ourselves, are to be envied, because we have so many privileges which others do not enjoy. We are

born of Catholic parents, brought up with care in the Christian religion, with priests enough to teach us, confessors in plenty to guide us in the path of virtue: we cannot do otherwise than be good unless we are very careless.

If we have not the happiness of seeing Jesus walking about and holding converse with the crowd, have we not Jesus with us in the Blessed Sacrament? We can walk and hold communion with Him every time we receive holy communion. Therefore we might be called blessed. Do we, however, make use of these occasions? Are we grateful for these advantages? Do we ever return thanks for them? Do we visit Our Lord in His church where He is really present in the Blessed Eucharist? You love Jesus, you like to be in His company. Why are you not more frequently in church, especially when public honor is given to the Blessed Sacrament? Are you among the first that press around His altar to do Him homage? God has been so good to us that we do not appreciate this great gift of faith. We lose our faith from the fact of the too great generosity of God. Hence it is that many do not believe that Christ is the light of the world. The wisdom of God is a stumbling-block to many.

Let us return to the consideration of the words of the Gospel: "A certain lawyer stood up tempting Him, and saying, Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?" My dear young friends, do you ever ask yourselves this question? Did you ever ask any one to direct you in this important affair "to possess eternal life"? It is the great aim of our life to get the possession of heaven. Has your spiritual director, your confessor, ever been consulted on the means of getting to heaven? I am afraid you have not consulted him, that you think it too irksome to speak of such things to anybody, that no one has a right to direct you in the way you should walk. I am sure that when your superiors wish to give you advice and direction, you become impudent and turn saucily upon them. Your confessor wants you to give up drink, which you are beginning to taste and to like; what a struggle there is for

your self-indulgence; how you insist on the most favorable terms! Your confessor advises you to give up certain company; those who make up that company will tell you you are a fool to listen to such advice, and may thus make his advice useless. The young are apt to be headstrong, and to be inclined to the gratification of their passions and to carrying out their desires. What must you do to keep yourselves good? What must you do to possess eternal life?

To this serious question Our Lord gives the following answer, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" The man answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." Our Lord said, "Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." Here is a very plain declaration of what we must do, my dear young friends, to possess eternal life: let me repeat it in a loud voice, "Love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." What a grand precept this is! Is God loved in this way by all our young people? Are there not many who love their passions more? They love games, their companions, the miserable creatures of this world more; they do not love God, they live without ever thinking of God. Miserable people are they, who by their works show they know not God, much less love Him.

St. Catherine of Genoa used to say, "What a horrible misfortune it is not to love God! O hell of hells, to be without the love of God!" To love God we must observe His holy law—not only one law, but all His laws; never offend Him, and hate sin. You must do His holy will. But to love God, you must know Him. Who is God? He is your Creator, who has loved you from all eternity; before you were brought into the world He knew you, and loved you; He had your ideal in His omnipotent mind, and then brought you out of nothingness by creation.

He is therefore your Lord and Master; were it not for Him, you would not exist. For you He created this beautiful

world, with all that is in it, that renders it so charming—hills, woods, green fields, rivers and oceans. For you He created the universe, and set it around this world and bespangled it with stars. All is for your service and all is maintained for you. Does not a God of such infinite goodness merit all your love?

Not only is God our Creator, He is also our most loving Redeemer, who came from heaven for our love, who has snatched us from the jaws of hell, who has brought the light of truth to us, who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death; who instituted the Sacraments, who shed His sacred blood for us, who opened for us the gates of paradise, and who now awaits us there to become sharers in His eternal glories. Does not so loving a Redeemer merit our love? Should you not from your tenderest years begin to love and serve so good a Master? Love Him, then, with your whole soul and with all your strength. Does not the whole world which He created show His goodness and call on you to love Him? St. Philip Neri says, "Lord, you being so worthy of my love, so dear, so good, why did you give me but one heart to love you, and a heart that is so small?"

The lawyer continued to question Our Lord, "And who is my neighbor?" Our Lord in answer told of an incident which happened in His day. A poor man fell among robbers and was nearly killed. Several people passed by, among them a Levite and a priest, but they went on, without manifesting any signs of sympathy. But there came by a good Samaritan, who placed the poor man on his beast and took him to a place of safety, where he could be cared for. Which among these, asked Our Saviour, acted in a charitable way? The doctor of the law answered, He, of course, who showed mercy. "Go," said Our Lord, "and do thou in like manner." There are several important points to be discussed in this story, especially the one of the love which we should show our neighbor: not only in sentiment, but by actual works of mercy. Another point is that this poor man is another figure

of sinful mankind. It is certain that the case is a counterpart of the spiritual life; the man that fell among the robbers, who left him half dead on the roadside, is the sinner. When you fall into sin, ah, then you may be sure you have fallen into the hands of the devil, who has come upon you like a robber. And to what a condition has he reduced you! He has robbed you of your precious garment of innocence, which made you so beautiful in the sight of God; he has robbed you of all the treasures you have gathered in your life and which you were carrying with you to heaven. But this is not all: look at the poor soul full of wounds, with barely a little faith left in her, the life of charity nearly extinct, there she lies stretched by the roadside, with no one to help her.

Can you imagine a condition more helpless and unfortunate than this? Not able to help yourself and dying for want of care! This dreadful mishap comes to many a youth; he goes along the road happy, full of vigor, but sin has struck him down; his soul is nearly dead, and he cannot move; he is carried along or dragged to the gates of hell, where all at once he awakes with the wails of the damned sounding in his ears. Be on your guard, my good friends, so as not to fall into the hands of those robbers, who will so despoil you that not a vestige of your old goodness will remain. Pray now that if it happen that sin should kill your soul, that Jesus, the good Samaritan, may look for you, pick you up kindly, place you on His beast of burden, and carry you to an inn, where you may recover under His loving care. Jesus is always waiting for such opportunities of succoring poor fallen humanity.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Luke* xvii. 11-19. *At that time*, as Jesus was going to Jerusalem, he passed through the midst of Samaria in Galilee. And as he entered into a certain town, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off: and lifted up their voice, saying: Jesus, master, have mercy on us. Whom when he saw, he said: Go, show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean. And one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God, and he fell on his face, before his feet, giving thanks; and this was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said: Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger. And he said to him: Arise, go thy way: for thy faith hath made thee whole.

THE CURE OF THE TEN LEPERS.

THE poor miserable sinner is represented in these lepers. The leper's body is not more horrid than is the condition of the sinner's soul. Leprosy is a very loathsome disease; it attacks different parts of the body, until they fall off from rottenness. It is an incurable disease and is propagated by contact. All nations, even uncivilized ones, have made laws against lepers. They are not allowed to mingle with the rest of humanity, they are excluded from cities and villages, and have to keep to themselves, in unfrequented places; they are allowed to come close to villages only to obtain food from the kindness of relatives, but they cannot live with them in their houses; in short, they have to live like the beasts of the field and shelter themselves as best they can.

Sin is like leprosy, that deforms the soul and deprives her of the grace and friendship of God. A soul adorned with the favors of God is one of the most beautiful of God's creations, little inferior to the angels. Such a beautiful soul is dear to God, to the Blessed Virgin, to the angels and to all the saints; this soul possesses such excellence that the inhabitants

of heaven desire her company for their enjoyment and the glory of God. No tongue can describe the greatness of the love of Jesus for a soul that is in grace. But when the soul is in a state of sin she becomes an object of the greatest abhorrence to almighty God. If we could only see the spiritual life as it really is, and realize what a horrible being the soul is which is covered with the rottenness of sin, we should fear to remain in that state.

God revealed to St. Catherine of Genoa the filthiness of sin, and she was so struck by it that she was at the point of death from the shock. Paul the Simple was accustomed to sit at the gates of a church to invite in the passers-by, good and bad. One day he saw a sinner in an abject condition coming along, accompanied by two devils; behind him followed his guardian angel full of shame and looking more like a vanquished prisoner than an angel of God. We all have pity when we see a convict going along, handcuffed, the guard standing over him with a loaded gun, and treating him with harshness. But we have more pity for such a one when we know that he is well educated, of good family, and that his condition forces him to lead such a life. Sin reduces us to the same condition of slavery, and binds us hands and feet to the devil, who is our attendant, who gives his commands in such a manner as to frighten us into obedience. O, if Christians would think what a great evil sin is, they would not commit it so easily. The saints, the great friends of God, had a just appreciation of what sin is; they trembled at the mention of sin; they would allow themselves to be cut into pieces rather than commit one. St. Frances of Rome when passing near a house where she knew sins were committed fainted, and afterwards said, "That is a house of ingratitude to God." St. Stanislaus, on hearing bad words at a dinner, fainted because he was so horrified. St. Anselm says, "If on the one side hell was open before me, and sin came from the opposite direction, I would rather throw myself into the flames of hell than go to meet sin." My dear young people, should you

ever be in sin, go at once and show yourself to the priest, and get rid of that leprosy by tears of compunction.

Why did Our Lord send the ten lepers to the priest uncured, while He could have cured them at once? Evidently Our Lord had a hidden meaning in His action. He sent them to the priest to be inspected and to be declared free from leprosy, according to the law of Moses. It signified to the lepers that the authority of the Church must be maintained, and to us that self-accusation to the priests appointed by authority is necessary. You, also, my young friends, when you find yourselves in sin, show yourselves to the priest at the tribunal of penance, for the priest has authority from Jesus to loose and to bind the sins of the penitent. Do not delay a long time, for if, through negligence, you hesitate to confess, you will little by little lose the horror you have felt at the seriousness of your condition, and you will put off your confession longer and longer, until you would be content to wait for years, as it often happens; for while you see that you prosper, that you enjoy health, that you continue to have friends and good companions, and that God shows no signs of present anger, you will think that the matter of sin has been much exaggerated, and you will continue to indulge in it. "To sin is human," said a holy Father, "but to remain in sin, and to persevere in it, is diabolical."

Leprosy is a malady that goes on increasing from day to day; it attacks the different members of the body successively, until the extremities are eaten away, then it strikes a vital point and the patient dies. Sin acts in the same way, especially the sin of impurity. We find many young people who are sunk so deeply in the meshes of this vice that it looks almost impossible to cure their poor souls of the wounds already inflicted; so these poor sinners excuse themselves to the confessor, maintaining that they cannot overcome their vice. According to human means, without the grace of God it would be impossible. The blind demands of our passions on us are very imperative. If you have a bodily sickness,

what do you not try in order to find a cure? You remain at home, stay in bed, call a doctor, take disagreeable medicines, and do not hesitate to spend any amount of money. What should we not do for the soul? We think little of the soul that has to live for all eternity; of that soul which, when once lost, is lost forever, and for which the Son of God has shed His precious blood. In the words of the Sacred Scriptures, I beg of you, "take care of your soul," and never let the leprosy of sin infect it. I read of a youth in the olden time who would rather lose all his possessions than renounce his faith; he said that his salvation was most precious to him. A worldling said to him, "Ah, what do you know of your soul? you are too young to entertain such thoughts," but the child answered, "Small as I am, I know that my soul is as precious as that of a wise philosopher; my soul can go to heaven or hell, and I am determined to lose all rather than lose my soul."

The Gospel gives us also a lesson in gratitude in the history of the ten lepers; only one of these came back to Our Lord, and he was a Samaritan, one who was supposed to belong to a false religion; he returned and gave thanks to God for his cure; the other nine went home. A great many of us Christians never feel the sentiment of gratitude. When God has freed us from the burden of our sins, and has healed our souls, we fall back into our old ways; hardly have we come out of the confessional, having hurriedly said our prayers, having perhaps received communion, before we are off to our sports and plays without an after-thought of thanksgiving to almighty God. When we have received a gift from God we ought at least to have the politeness to say, "I thank you." Hence, after confession and communion we ought to stay a while on our knees and prolong the sentiment of gratitude that these sacred moments should produce in our heart. This, then, you ought to do: when God has pardoned your sins in confession, thank Him for that great act of kindness, and understand fully that He loves you and wants to bring

you to heaven. Remember that you ought, at least, to show your gratitude for His goodness to you, and should never fail to do so.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* vi. 24-33. *At that time, Jesus said to his disciples:* No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? And which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? And for raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, O ye of little faith? Be not solicitous therefore, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice: and all these things shall be added unto you.

NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS.—GOD AND MAMMON.

No man can serve two masters, especially if they give contrary orders, and are enemies, for we love the one and hate the other. In pagan times men used to adore Mammon as the god of riches in order that he would procure money for his worshippers. Mammon and God are enemies and are opposed to each other, therefore they cannot be served by the same person at the same time. You are, then, my dear young friends, this day to choose which of these two masters you will love and obey. The masters that lay claim to your souls

are God and the devil. The world and the devil wish you to serve them. The devil seeks by promises of a happy, contented life, to gain you to his side. Let me at the very outset tell you that these promises are false; while they appear to be good gifts they are in reality misfortunes. When the devil in paradise tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit he held out great inducements to them. "You shall be as gods," he said. But none of that happiness was ever realized; our first parents were cursed by almighty God, the sign of condemnation was set upon their foreheads, they were driven out of paradise and had to gain their bread by the sweat of their brows. Still the world will say, "Come, let us enjoy all the good things of this earth; crown yourselves with roses and enjoy the happiness and joyousness of your youth; I will make you contented and give you honors and riches." Great and brilliant are the promises held out to us by the world, and who knows but we will yield to them? In that event our case will be like that of the prodigal son, who put himself under the mastership of the world and the devil; away from his father's house he thought he could enjoy himself without interruption, but there came a time when, despised by all, he became a swineherd, poor, without clothing, and suffering from hunger, with not even the husks that were fed to the swine to eat.

Supposing that for some years you should enjoy life to its full extent, lawlessly and without restraint, what would your feelings be at the hour of death? You would then experience the most bitter remorse. A great man when on his death-bed had his young son brought to him. "My son," he said, "do not believe in the promises of the world as I have believed; let me impress two things on your mind that are absolutely true: one is, that you will have but little pleasure in this world, and the second, that you will have much sorrow if you have enjoyed those pleasures unlawfully." If the devil is your master in life he will certainly be your master in eternity; he will be your companion, and not a peaceful one, or

one that you will enjoy, but he will torment you in every way that his cruel ingenuity can suggest. Looking at this master in this light, do you really want to serve him? And yet you do serve him when you imitate him in his wickedness.

Your other and your real master is God. He, too, is anxious that you should serve Him. He is yearning after your soul, He is a beggar of souls. How different is He from that miserable creature, the devil! how good and loving God is! It is true He places a burden on you, but it is sweet and light. He desires that you take the cross on your shoulders and follow Him, and not only in the end, but even during your labors and trials, you will possess peace and consolation. You will understand that the serving of God is a calling so high and so noble that it is equal to a royal dignity. And when this life is at an end He will share with you His own glory in heaven.

What does it mean to have God not only on earth by grace, but to possess Him in heaven in all His glory? We cannot realize this while we are in the flesh; we see it only as it were in a glass. In heaven all your faculties will be full of life, your memory will be a life of universal recollection of the past; your intellect will understand the mystery of God's infinite goodness; your eyes will see heavenly and agreeable sights; your ears hear the most beautiful music. Is it not, then, really sad that we have to prove the necessity of the love of God, in order to induce us to do some good; is it not awful that we should leave God and cling to that impious tyrant, Satan? There are so many people in this world who give up the service of God to associate with the prince of darkness, people who revel in wickedness and hate virtue. You ruthlessly drive God out of your soul when you have a bad thought, or when you do a wicked action, and you set the devil up in your heart as its master and dictator. Say with determination to the devil, "Get behind me, Satan; never will I have anything to do with you;" but to God cry out, "Thou art the God of my heart and my portion for all eter-

nity." Our divine Redeemer, after having told us that no one can serve two masters, that God must be served alone, gives us some clear and beautiful instructions which need no explanation. He says, "I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on." God provides with munificence for the birds of the air, gives them what they need and keeps them alive. How beautifully He decks the field with flowers—then how much more will He provide for us! Do not always think of earthly advantages, for the Gentiles, the pagans, and the worldlings look for these things. Still, notwithstanding all these promises of a good father, what anxiety do we not feel about the comforts of life, our health; what fear we have of death. This is to a certain extent a want of faith and trust. "God, who giveth to beasts their food, and to the young ravens that call upon Him," will not desert us, though sometimes the prospect looks dark and discouraging. Ah, I hear somebody say, God does not provide for me; I work for myself; but in things over which I have no power, in sickness or poverty, where is His arm? Let this be my answer: If you would remove all misery and poverty from this world, first remove sin, and there will not be so much suffering. Who are those that are poor? They are the lazy loafers who do nothing, the frequenters of drinking-places, who earn no money or spend their earnings in the saloon. Perhaps God strikes them with poverty to show them that they ought to act differently. The crimes of the human race are often the cause of its sufferings. We read in Leviticus the threats that God made to the people of Israel, unless they remained faithful to Him: "I will quickly visit you with poverty and burning heat, which shall waste your eyes and consume your lives; you shall sow your seed in vain, which shall be devoured by your enemies." "Trust in the Lord and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches." If you have this confidence in God, He will be specially kind to you, and you shall want for nothing. The saints have always had this trust in God, and even when

they gave away all they had, did they starve, or were they in want? They put their trust in Providence and were never disappointed. Let your greatest and first solicitude be to look for the kingdom of God and His justice, and all things else will be given you in due time.

Therefore look first for the kingdom of God. But, my dear young people, do we do this? Oh, there are so many who have their eyes constantly fixed on the earth and never raise them from it to look up to heaven. They think of nothing but this life, as if they were to remain here forever; as if the day would never come when they would be called out of the world; they are entirely occupied with the enjoyment of life; they have nothing before them but the goods and honors of this world. And thus they renounce their right to heaven; they seek not the kingdom of God and His justice. Poor, deluded beings! They are attracted by the false promises of the devil, which will never be realized, for these promises are further and further from fulfillment and the sinners pass their lives in a vain hope. My dear young people, be not deceived nor follow the example of the wicked; have your eyes fixed on God in all your work. "I am thy protector and thy reward exceeding great." The pilgrim pays little attention to the beauty of the scenery and the great possessions of the rich; his aim is to get to his fatherland as soon as possible; and we, following his example, should study the shortest paths to our celestial home. "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Luke* vii. 11-16. *At that time Jesus* went into a city that is called Naim: and there went with him his disciples, and a great multitude. And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and a great multitude of the city was with her. Whom when the Lord had seen, being moved with mercy towards her, he

said to her: Weep not. And he came near and touched the bier. (And they that carried it stood still.) And he said: Young man, I say to thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. And there came a fear on them all: and they glorified God, saying: A great prophet is risen up among us: and God hath visited his people.

CHRIST RAISES THE WIDOW'S SON TO LIFE.

Behold here a bright, joyous and lively youth, snatched from the enjoyment of life by death. He is being carried out of the town to be buried, and he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Friends were walking after the bier, the disconsolate mother resting on the arm of a friend. The widow had suffered a great loss, for this son was her sole support, her help, her consolation; her sorrow affected the whole community, and all went forth to show their sympathy. It is absolutely true, and it seems foolish to state such a truism, that every man must at some time die. "It is appointed unto men once to die." Death does not respect time, place, person or age; it comes at the appointed hour. Death will grasp those who are to be its victims in any place, on land or on sea, in the house, in the church, wherever he finds them, he cuts the thread of life and the end has come. In the midst of pleasure, many deaths are known to have occurred, even in the mad whirl of the dance. Death does not wait for an opportune time; when you are ready, or when you have gained the object of your ambition, or finished a certain work which you were to do, day or night, it is all alike to him; old age, of course, has to go; youth is so frequently called that he cannot promise himself any time; the average life of man is twenty-two years, and even during this time you may be called upon at any moment. Neither is death restricted in the mode of his execution. He needs no fever, no convulsions, no consumption, in short no particular sickness; he cuts off the thread of life just because your race is over. Look at the fish still struggling in the water to get

away from the angler; it is soon drawn to the shore, palpitating and jumping, and a few moments will seal its doom, soon all will be over. The net is perhaps enveloping us, too; we are as lively as ever and think little of death, but the net will be drawn to the shore and the end has come. Many are called out of this world without the least warning. One drops on the road, another drowns, one is struck by lightning, another is cut down by the hand of an assassin; all these never dreamed that death was so near, and thought they had many more years to live.

Our Lord tells us the hour of death is very uncertain, for He says: "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour. . . . Be you also ready, because at what hour you know not the Son of man will come." He even tells us that He steals secretly upon us. "The day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night." Death may come to you in your sleep, or when you are at play. Cannot death as easily cut your life short when you are committing sin? And if death should come upon you without giving you time to prepare for the dread future, not even by a single good thought, what would become of your soul? Might it not be possible that you would find yourself in hell? When this is possible is it not presumption and temerity to remain one day in mortal sin? Who of us, even for a short time, would like to lie alongside a corpse, and yet we go to bed without hesitation when our soul is dead in sin. Do we not know that mortal sin hastens death; for we read that "the sting of death is sin." It is not fasting, abstinence or mortification that shortens life, but the sins, the vices, the passions we are subject to. Those bad communions, those sacrilegious confessions, our cold ingratitude shorten our lives. "The years of the wicked shall be shortened," and again we read: He "was wicked in the sight of the Lord and was slain by Him." Of one who committed a heinous crime it is said "for that the Lord struck him, because he had done a detestable thing."

Once when Anastasius in his dreams was plotting great cruelties against the people, he saw before him a man of horrible appearance who had a book in which was written his sins: "See," he said, "I shall take fourteen years from the number of your days." Anastasius woke up, but was not certain whether he ought to treat the dream as a warning or as a foolish delusion. A few days afterwards thunder and lightning came down from a clear sky. Anastasius was terror-stricken, for an interior voice seemed to say to him that this terrible demonstration was intended for him; thereupon he hid himself in a closet, but a stroke of lightning came down and killed him in his hiding-place.

Do not these texts of the Bible and these simple anecdotes prove to us that God has sometimes shortened the lives of sinners? We can conclude, therefore, that all sins, not perhaps so markedly, but as surely, bring about the same consequences. And this ought to be a lesson to you, my dear young friends, for would you not call a halt to your sins if you knew positively that you were shortening your days by exciting the wrath of the Almighty, to say nothing of the sickness that indulgence in vice brings about?

The thought of the nearness of death is a salutary means to curb our passions. Look at the flower; no sooner is its beauty fully developed than its decay is at hand. Look at the waters of the fountain; for a while they sparkle in the basin in which they are born, but they soon run away and are seen no more. Look from your window at the glorious sun shining brilliantly in the zenith, and then setting behind the horizon for the night; remember that all this is a figure of death. Holy Job kept the memory of death in his mind, comparing it sometimes to the rapid passage of a runner, to the leaf blown along by the wind, to the flower, to the passing storm. But what conclusion does light-hearted youth draw from the short-lived pleasures of this world? On them there is produced no serious impression. If our life disappears like a speck of dust, let us enjoy it while we may,

even though in doing so we sin. Ah, my dear young friends, this is all wrong; you should work as though this were the last day of your life; pray as though it were for the last time; go to confession and communion as if they were the last you were to make. This is the way to make your life profitable, and then the Judge will be a welcome visitor, because you are prepared for Him, and you have not been taken unawares.

"Blessed is that servant, whom when his lord shall come, he shall find so doing." Wake up, my good young people, and do something for eternity; give up those vices and sins which will be your eternal damnation; bewail the crimes which have so far led you astray, and God will take you by the hand, raise you from death, and give you eternal life.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Luke* xiv. 1-11. *At that time* when Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees, on the sabbath day, to eat bread, they watched him. And behold there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy. And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? But they held their peace. But he, taking him, healed him, and sent him away. And answering them, he said: Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer him to these things. And he spoke a parable also to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them: When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honorable than thou be invited by him, and he that inviteth thee and him, come and say to thee: Give this man place: and then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place: but when thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place: that when he who invited thee cometh, he may say to thee: Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at the table with thee. Because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

THE OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY.

Our divine Lord went about, continually doing good to all; He instructed the ignorant, healed the sick, brought the dead to life, and freed those possessed of the devil. All these benefits ought to have made Him beloved by all; many did love the good Jesus, but there were others who hated Him, and were constantly persecuting Him. So far did their hatred go, that long before the time appointed by Providence for His death they sought to apprehend Him, and once indeed they even took up stones to put Him to death, but He made Himself invisible to them and walked away unmolested. His goodness was a stumbling-block to them. The same thing will be found among Christians; it is hard to believe, but there are Pharisees among us; there are people who hate those who are doing good. They do not wish to be good themselves, and they can not bear that others should be. As soon as they hear that some one has distinguished himself by good works, they try to detract from his work; they talk against it, and blacken his character as well as the act itself. This is so abominable and ignominious a disposition that you cannot find worse—it is something of the nature of the sin of Cain. Abel, the good and pious husbandman had given to the Lord as a sacrifice the wheat of the field, and for this the fire of God's love descended on the offering and consumed it. So angry did Cain become, that he could no longer bear his brother, and conceived the terrible idea of murdering him. He invited him to go with him to a field, with the ostensible purpose of looking at something in which both were interested. There he took a club and killed Abel. What a horrible thing was this first murder, the result of envy. Could not Cain have been as good as Abel? One was better than the other, and consequently God loved him more. Envy is the devil's principal vice, and one reason why he wishes to do so much injury to human kind. We manifest this same murderous disposition when we practice envy for any reason

whatever, but especially when we feel envious of others who are better than we are. It is a most disagreeable trait of character not to like the good qualities of our neighbor. There are many young people who by jokes and ridicule lead others astray, and make themselves willing and effective tools of Satan. They diminish the number of saints in heaven and rob many of the society of Our Lord, and by destroying their chance of going to heaven make His sacred blood ineffectual in their case. Of such as these I would ask, do you not fear, do you not tremble, to heap up against yourself the anger of almighty God? Think of this seriously, cease your envy against your brethren who wish to serve God, guard against the ruin of souls by scandal, seek to encourage others to practice virtue, to bring many over to the following of Christ, and your reward will be exceeding great.

While the Pharisees were closely watching Our Lord, there was a man among the audience sick of the dropsy. Turning to the Pharisees Jesus asked them, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" Our Lord had often healed on this day of rest, but they had taken offence at it, and made it a cause of accusation. But now they did not answer. Then Our Lord took the sick man by the hand, healed him and sent him away. And turning to the Pharisees He said: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath-day?" And they could not answer Him. Our Lord could but pity the blindness of these men.

The Jews were such exact observers of the laws of the Sabbath-day that they even abstained from doing works of charity. Our Lord on this occasion wished to teach them that it was not wrong to do a good action on this day; in fact that it was the day on which such things should be done. Let me make a few reflections on the manner of sanctifying the feasts of the Church. The Catechism of the Council of Trent tells us that we sanctify the day by hearing Mass, receiving communion, and hearing the word of God. But

what do our young people do on feast days? How few there are who give ear to the command of the Church to hear Mass; they would rather go and enjoy themselves, drinking and carousing: if they assist at Mass they are there only in body; their mind is engaged on subjects totally foreign to what is going on; their eyes wander here and there, they talk and laugh, even at the most sacred parts of the Mass, or when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed; month after month passes, even year after year, and they do not approach the sacred tribunal of penance or go to holy communion. They ought to hear the word of God, but do they perform this duty? And even should they be present at a sermon, do they remember any of the salutary lessons given by the preacher? The sanctification of the feasts of God's Church is a positive and clear command. We read in the Scriptures, that "the rest of the Sabbath is sanctified to the Lord." Are they not very wicked who do as they please on holy days or who commit sin on these days? What have they to expect from the judgments of God?

Once when the Israelites were wandering in the desert, preparatory to the time when they were to be admitted into the Promised Land, a man was discovered gathering kindling-wood on the Sabbath-day; he was brought to Moses and Aaron and the assembled tribes of Israel. The decision was that he should be kept securely in prison until they had received word from God what was to be done. God's order was that he should be taken outside the camp and stoned to death.

This world was not made by almighty God simply for our pleasure, nor were the days given us for the same purpose; in short God has reserved to Himself certain days, which we should consecrate to Him. These occasions are like days of mercy and grace, on which, for a while, at least, we withdraw from the things of this world, in order to raise our eyes and our hearts to God. Sanctify, then, these days; do not desecrate them by unlawful work, by dissipation or by sin. I know that those who are advanced in years ought to

give you a good example in this regard. We often find avaricious old men and women, working at their trades or spending hours in playing cards, or in games. But be not infected by their wickedness. Even should unscrupulous employers or your parents command you to work on Sunday or a holy day, say openly and frankly, "I will not work—'I will obey God rather than man.'" Do not content yourself by doing only a little of God's will on these days; do all that is required for their sanctification. Hear Mass with great devotion and listen to the word of God preached by His ministers. See how our forefathers, even in times of persecution, observed the feasts of the Church! They descended into the catacombs of Rome, heard Mass, and went to communion; there they remained engaged in holy discourse, exhorting one another to give up life and liberty for Jesus Christ. The mother would point out to her children the tomb of a father, brother or daughter, who had given up life for Christ, and inspire them with courage to remain faithful to the end. Remember we are the children of the saints, and should live and die as they lived and died.

Our Lord wishes also on this occasion to give to the Pharisees a lesson of humility. It was their custom, on account of their rank and their pretended piety, to look for the places of honor at the table. The very humiliation which sometimes befell them ought to have taught them better. For often when one of them had taken the first place at the table the master of the house would be obliged to say to him, "There is a great friend of mine here who must sit at my side, so you will have to go down lower and make room for him." They should have understood that they ought to take the last place, and then, if they merited a better one, the master of the house would certainly ask them to go up higher; then they would be honored before all the guests. For "whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." Be humble, there-

fore; do not place yourself above others, nor try to make them stepping-stones for your own greatness.

No one can ever follow out these rules of the Gospel without prayer. By means of this powerful weapon, you will obtain humility and you will lead a happy life, for the more humble you are the more will you be exalted and freed from ambitious desires that rob you of your peace of mind. Remember that the more you shall be humbled and despised in this world the greater will be your reward in heaven.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* xxii. 35-46. *At that time, the Pharisees came nigh to Jesus:* and one of them, a doctor of the law, asked him, tempting him: Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets. And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying: What think you of Christ? Whose son is he? They say to him: David's. He saith to them: How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying: The Lord said to my Lord: Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy foot-stool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word: neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

THE LOVE OF GOD AND OF OUR NEIGHBOR.

THE good people that surrounded Our Lord when He was preaching blessed Him for His admirable doctrines, and for the wisdom of His answers. Not so the Pharisees; they followed Him to ask Him questions, that they might entrap Him, and use His words against Him. For that reason they came to Him "tempting Him." One of these hypocritical Pharisees, a doctor of the law, put this question to Our Lord, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

Our Lord saw through the duplicity of this man, who did not desire instruction, but sought rather to bring confusion on the Master. He did not deserve an answer, on the contrary he should have received a rebuke. But the honor of Our Lord's heavenly Father was at stake, and the crowd was eager to learn: so Christ answered first, and afterwards rebuked him.

We, my dear young people, can draw a lesson from this manner of acting: that as Christ did, we also should do. We should learn meekness of speech. How do we answer those who question us? Often in our impatience and disrespect for others, we burst into unkind words and threats. To our superiors we are often cold and disdainful, making our instruction and correction difficult and distasteful to them. Ah, my dear young friends, always answer kindly; be charitable and polite, be Christians and close followers of the Redeemer. "Be ye kind one to another." Cassian relates that there lived in Alexandria a holy old man surrounded by many infidels who spoke injurious things of him, but he stood all their abuse with an unmoved heart. "What miracles did Jesus Christ perform?" they asked. "Ah," he replied, "He has done one miracle that you can see with your own eyes. I do not resent the injuries inflicted on me. He has given me the grace to bear with patience all your persecutions. This is a great miracle, a great and sublime perfection, which I have attained by the intervention of Christ."

Let us now come to the sweet answer which the Lord gave: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment." My dear young friends, have you ever thought of this great precept: to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind? Our Lord calls the heart, soul, and mind into the work of love, and not without reason. Love God with your whole heart, be generous and fervent in your love. "My son, give Me thy heart." Have you given your heart with all its

affections to God? Ah, who knows but you have given your heart to the world, to vice, and to the devil! How many there are who in their childhood give their hearts to God, but as they grow up, they give them to sin. You were good in your tender years, pious, affectionate and loving; but in course of time you have taken back this sacred gift to give it to the devil. What is it to love God with all your soul? Your soul is a pure, intelligent spirit, that has the power of clinging to God so entirely that nothing should interfere with that intercourse. You should also love Him with all your mind. All your thoughts should be centred on God alone; your will should be so directed as to make you think of God and to love Him. All the powers of your mind should be stirred up to do that for which you were created; your whole body, your eyes, ears, mouth, feet and hands, should be active in the love of God. All your desires should be wakened to love Him; if you eat, do it for the love of God; if you enjoy the things of this world, rejoice in the Lord; if you fear, fear God for His justice; if you are sad, bewail your sins and the sins of others. This is the way to love God, and if you do this your soul will be filled with the peace and happiness of heaven. So great will this happiness be, that with St. Ephrem you will cry out, "Lord, retire a little; my frail condition cannot endure this love." And with St. Francis Xavier, "Lord, it is enough!" Why do you and why did the saints feel such a joy? Because it is a foretaste of the joys of heaven. God is not loved without a reward, says St. Bernard: all this delight is given you as a reward in this vale of tears.

My dear young friends, let not the false splendor of the good things of this world interfere with your love for God. You know that these splendors are false and that they cannot satisfy nor content your heart; despise them then as the saints did. We read the following of St. Clement: Diocletian, a great and bitter enemy of the faith, caused St. Clement to be brought before him; heaps of money, vases of gold, and magnificent robes were brought in and placed on one

side; while on the other side were chains, manacles, and instruments of torture. Then Diocletian said to the saint: "If you deny Christ, all this wealth is yours, besides many honors and rich offices that are in the gift of an emperor as great as I am. But if you persist in the worship of Christ, these instruments of torture and of death will be used on you without mercy. Think and choose." Did the saint hesitate for a moment? No; he cast an eye of supreme contempt on the tyrant and his treasures, and turning from them, said, in the words of the Apostle, that neither height nor depth, that is, neither good nor evil, should ever draw him from the love that he owed to Jesus Christ. Was not this an heroic example of the love of Jesus?

But to this precept of the whole-souled love of God, we must also join the love of our neighbor; a precept, as Our Lord calls it, very like the first. "The second is like to this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Love of yourself is presented to you as the rule by which you may be directed in the love of your neighbor. It is not likely that you will consider you have given in too much to your self-love. We are composed of body and soul, therefore we must love our neighbor in body and soul. Regarding the body, you must do him no injury, not even in wish; help him in all his necessities; console him in all his afflictions; sacrifice yourself for him; in other words, forget yourself in the service of your fellow-man. But more important than the body is the soul. What must you do for your neighbor in regard to his soul? Always give him good example; gently correct him when he needs it; lead him away from bad associates; draw him to church and to the sacraments. Pray for the wicked in all your supplications to God. You can do more to convert your neighbor than a priest can with his sermons; you can bring personal influence to bear on him. The priest may preach himself hoarse and tired; you have the heart of your friend in your hands and can mould it; if not at once, at least by degrees. Besides,

as St. James says, "The continual prayer of a just man availeth much."

St. Francis of Assisi did not think he loved God unless he proved it by bringing souls to Him. St. Ignatius Loyola said that if he had one foot in heaven he would come back if he saw an opportunity of saving one soul. The Curé d'Ars said after his communion, "How many souls would I gain for God if I were a priest!" St. Catharine of Sienna declared that she would throw herself at the devil, and struggle with him for the possession of a soul to bring it to God. She was a poor, weak Sister, and yet how many souls did she not save for God. How did she do it? Was it by eloquence and by learning? No; she did it by the great hatred she had for sin, and by the great love she had for sinners. With the same dispositions you can do as much as she did. You have not eloquence nor the opportunity to use it if you had it, but you can have this hatred for sin, you can have love for the sinner, you can help the grace of Jesus Christ to become operative in the hearts of your neighbor. "We are the helpers of God," says St. Paul. Pray fervently to Our Lord and to the Blessed Virgin, and they will give you victory over the most obstinate cases. Let me give you an example showing how you may use your influence on your friends and relations. A little girl, nine years old, seeing that her father refused the sacraments on his death-bed, was full of sorrow and concern. Being left alone with the dying man she conceived a happy thought. She went into the room and took her place near his pillow. The father noticed her and said, "What are you doing, my dear?" "Father," she answered, "I want to bid you an eternal farewell. I shall not see you again in this world, and, certainly, not in the next. They tell me you are going to die, and you cannot go to heaven, because you refuse to go to confession and you will be damned. How unhappy I am! I shall never again see my father whom I love so much!" The dying man could no longer restrain his tears. "Console yourself, my dear, I want to go to confes-

sion." He lived for some time after the occurrence, and to all that visited him he related how he owed his conversion to his little daughter.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* ix. 1-8. *At that time:* Jesus entering into a boat passed over the water and came into his own city. And behold they brought to him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed. And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy: Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee. And behold some of the scribes said within themselves: He blasphemeth. And Jesus seeing their thoughts, said: Why do you think evil in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee: or to say: Arise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then said he to the man sick of the palsy): Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house. And he arose, and went into his house. And the multitude seeing it feared, and glorified God that gave such power to men.

"SON, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE."

OUR divine Redeemer, who came down from heaven, was continually active in the work of the salvation of men by constant preaching and by journeyings up and down the land of Palestine in search of poor, miserable sinners to bring them back to God. He healed them all, for "the power of the Lord was to heal them."

Among the many parables given by Our Lord, let us meditate on the one of to-day's Gospel. One day Our Lord was in a boat and had Himself brought across the lake of Genesareth to His own city Capharnaum. They called Capharnaum His city, because He made His home there in the house of Simon, when He was in the vicinity. He had left Nazareth long before, and seldom went back to the place. No man is a prophet in his own country, and the inhabitants of Nazareth were incredulous, and used to ask, "Is not this the carpenter's Son? Whence, therefore, hath He all these things?"

Capharnaum was quite a large city, situated at the head

of Lake Genesareth; there was, in a small way, considerable inland commerce and fishing there and the people seemed more approachable than at other places. When they heard that Jesus had come a great crowd ran to the house where He was, filled it, and even blockaded the approaches to it. It was with difficulty that a poor cripple, a man who had lost the use of all his limbs, was brought there. As it was not possible to get in by the door, the man's friend climbed to the roof and making a hole in it, they lowered the sick man into Our Lord's presence. The kindness of those who assisted in this act was certainly very great, for a great deal of labor was required. Our Lord Himself was pleased with this exhibition of faith, and at once took notice of the sick man who was laid before Him. Great was the charity that these men exhibited when they undertook to bring the paralytic to Our Lord. But Our Lord did not consider the body at first; He thought of the soul, and began by forgiving the man's sins. When we are sick, all sorts of advice is offered to us, and the doctor is at once sent for; this is as it should be. My young friends, when you hear that one of your relatives is sick you ought to show an interest in him and do what you can for him; when your friends and companions fall sick, show by your sympathetic manner that you feel an interest in their welfare and in their health; you are thus practising one of the works of mercy, which is very important. Nothing is more beautiful than to see young people helping their companions, and faithfully remaining at their side until the sick ones are cured, or until death comes; parents and relatives will willingly yield their places to them, for they know how affectionate young people can be to one another. But you ought to help particularly, when you find that your friend is sick unto death in sin; then you ought not delay trying to revive him. Go out and find those who do not hear Mass, who will not go to confession, and talk to them, that you may gain them. This is an acceptable gift to God, and He will reward you accordingly. Our Lord did not cure the poor

man that was brought to Him at once. God has His time for everything. When we pray we often think that our prayer is not heard because we do not see a miracle wrought at once, but God's time is according to God's wisdom for our own good.

Our Lord said to the sick man, "Have confidence: thy sins are forgiven thee." Why did He wish first to forgive his sins and then to cure him of his bodily ills? Because sin is the great evil, in fact, is the only evil in the world, and sickness is only a consequence. If we say all miseries, sickness, death, and starvation are nothing, who will believe us? In fact most people in this world will not understand this; they take no account of sin; these people do not want to know that their own poverty and wickedness and that of millions of others are the result of sin. In Deuteronomy the Scripture says that "The Lord will strike thee with want, fever, and cold, on account of thy infidelity." You see that God deals out punishment and reward, even here on this earth, though we do not see it. Let us look at the happenings of the world not like an atheist, but like one who believes that God holds the world in His hands, and regulates its events according to His supreme will. Here is a young man who has fallen into a very serious sickness. His friends say he caught cold, or did not take care of himself—that he was careless or neglectful; often, were they to look below the surface, they would find more than carelessness or neglect—they would find that his illness was but the consequence of his sins. Much of the poverty and evil on this earth could be avoided did people lead better lives, and try to conform themselves to the teachings of Our Lord and Saviour; to avoid temptations, or to have recourse to fervent prayer when temptations do come. We know, of course, that God often afflicts those He loves best with many physical ills—but if He does He gives reward a hundredfold in the end; and gives them, too, a patient endurance and resignation under all their sufferings. However, the fact remains that most of the troubles in this world come from sin, and since this is a fact we ought to

learn to avoid sin, fear it, abhor it, and let it never become our master.

The Scribes who heard Jesus say "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee," immediately cried out, "He blasphemeth; who can forgive sin but God only?" Jesus was God, and to prove it He said, "Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, thy sins are forgiven thee, or say, Arise, take up thy bed and walk?" You will say, that to man both are equally impossible, that God alone can do this. To prove to them, then, that He was God and could forgive sins, He commanded the sick man to arise and walk. No sooner had Our Lord pronounced these words than the man not only arose and left the bed he had not stirred from in a long time, but was able to remove the bed from the house to which he had been carried. The people who had witnessed this miracle praised God for the power He possessed of forgiving sins and of healing so hopeless a case. The Pharisees looked on in stupid wonder, but did not accept the grace of conversion.

Here we have a picture of many Christians and of many young men who hear of the wonders of God, but continue in their wicked lives, and remain obstinate unbelievers. Nothing that God may do seems to move them.

My good young friends, you certainly know from your early education that God has given you the great Sacrament of Penance, for the forgiveness of sins, to help you to get to heaven. Baptism is great indeed, because it makes us children of God; but it is also necessary that there should be another sacrament which, when Baptism has been once received will again cleanse us and supply again and again the necessary grace to become friends of God.

Great indeed was the mercy of God when He instituted the Sacrament of Penance. But does the sinner avail himself of this means of grace? Many abuse it, and use it rather as an encouragement to crime. "I will go on in my manner of life," says the sinner, "and when I have a great deal to confess, I will unburden myself." He will wait until a large

number is preparing for the sacrament and then he hopes to get through easily; he thinks that this sacrament can be received at any time; "when the opportunity presents itself I will go," he says. Will you, my dear young man, take poison because you have at hand an antidote for it? Will you carelessly inflict a deadly wound on your body because a doctor can be procured at any time? How insane would such an act be! Still there are many of this foolish class. Not only are there many who abuse the graces of this sacrament by an unworthy reception of it, but a number have not the proper disposition for receiving it. You ought to examine your conscience before going to confession. Do you review your life since your last confession so as to place your duties before you? And if you have your sins ready in your mind, do you accuse yourself with real sorrow, or do you only say an act of contrition by word of mouth? You surely know that it is not the mere recital of your sins which is the great requirement in the sacrament of confession; you know that without sorrow there is no forgiveness. It includes also a resolution of future amendment. You go to confession not only to receive the forgiveness of past sins, but you must see to it that you lead a better life in the future. I will say nothing of those who avoid the confessional as they would a pest. These are like people in a shipwreck, who would not grasp at a plank by which they might keep afloat and be saved. They evidently wish to be damned and to go to hell. Take this lesson on confession to heart; use it for your salvation and if you should fall into sin, you can turn to God again. He will receive you with open arms, as He received the prodigal son: "The son that was lost is found again." Go to the minister of God's justice, the priest, with sorrow; tell him your frailties, bewail them with bitterness, resolve that in the future you will avoid all occasions of sin, and watch over your passions carefully in order that you may not fall. And these consoling words will sink deep into your soul, "Have confidence, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* xxii. 1-14. *At that time: Jesus spoke to the chief priests and Pharisees* in parables, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son. And he sent his servants to call them that were invited to the marriage: and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying: Tell them that were invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come ye to the marriage. But they neglected: and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. And the rest laid hands on his servants, and, having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. But when the king had heard of it, he was angry, and, sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers, and burnt their city. Then he saith to his servants: The marriage indeed is ready; but they that were invited were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage. And his servants going forth into the ways, gathered together all that they found, both bad and good: and the marriage was filled with guests. And the king went in to see the guests, and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. And he saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the king said to the waiters: Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

THE KING WHO MADE A MARRIAGE-FEAST FOR HIS SON.

A CERTAIN king wished to celebrate in a royal manner the marriage-feast of his son, and he invited many to the banquet.

The figure is taken from the habits of great people in the East; when they made a feast, all the surrounding country was invited, and the festivities lasted several days; all that was needed for full enjoyment was supplied through the generosity of the host.

When the hour appointed for the feast had come, the servants were sent out to make known that all was ready, but they that were invited made excuses, and did not want

to come, and this insulted the king. Again he sent out the servants to these and importuned them to come, but they turned their backs; some went off to cities, others went to their ordinary business avocations. There were some more cruel, who got angry at this importunity, and ill-used the servants, and went so far as to kill some of them. The first part of this parable is pointed at the Jews, whose ingratitude it shows, for which they deserve a severe rebuke from God. He sent them prophets, great and good men, filled with the Holy Ghost. Then He sent them John the Baptist, the greatest man born of woman, but they would not listen to him. He sent them the Apostles, filled with the spirit of God, who spoke a language which all might understand, who worked great miracles and healed the sick, and still the Jews were obstinate and persecuted them, had them crucified and inflicted the most cruel punishment on them. As soon as the king heard of this ill-treatment of his messengers he became angry, and great was the punishment that came over them.

Sixty years after the death of Our Lord, the Romans appeared before the walls of Jerusalem, with a great army; they attacked the city, burned and destroyed everything, even the beautiful Temple itself, till nothing remained, not a stone upon a stone. This is the punishment which God inflicted on the Jews for their obstinacy. All the great kindness and mercy of God was rejected by this miserable people; they remained firm in their unbelief, and God almost annihilated this nation, of which He had taken such special care for many centuries.

My dear young friends, not a moment passes that God does not speak to our heart, to induce us to live a more devout and recollected life, to frequent the sacraments, to give more good example, to hate sin, to avoid it, and to conceive greater love for Him, your God, your Creator, your Father, and your Redeemer. Ah, I beg of you with this example of God's just anger before you, do not turn a deaf ear to His loving

invitation. When He had settled with these obstinate people in a way they deserved, he called His servants again, and gave them further instructions. Since those who were invited are not worthy to come to My feast, and My feast is ready, you must try to fill the places. Go out into the highways and byways of the country, and whomsoever you meet bring them hither. The Jews had refused obedience and God abandoned them, but He turned to the Gentiles and sent His Apostles to them to instruct them, and to preach to them the glorious tidings of the Gospel. We ourselves were of the number of the Gentiles. We came into the light, from out of the darkness, and we embraced that faith.

Great and generous was the call; we were not needed, even though the Jews refused Him. God took us up gratuitously, and adopted us into His nation, His holy people. How many others still remain blind and destitute! Millions of Mohammedans and pagans go to hell. "As the snow-flakes fall from the sky, so do these souls fall into the abyss of hell." Who does not lament their sad fate! God might have had us born among these people, and we, too, would have been deprived of the light of faith; but as we were born among Christians and have been taught and brought up in the true religion, we ought to think seriously of how we can show our appreciation of God's mercy and kindness—our gratitude for this undeserved call.

Let us, my dear young friends, be firm and constant to the Catholic Church, out of which there is no salvation. St. Francis de Sales kept such thoughts as these before his mind, for he said he could not thank God enough for making him a son of the Church. "Great, O God, great are Thy benefits to me; how can I thank Thee for the light of faith!" St. Louis, king of France, was once congratulated on being a descendant of a great and glorious royal house. "That is nothing," he answered; "the greatest gift that I have enjoyed from God is, that He has deigned to have me baptized a member of His Church."

In the meanwhile all the guests were in their places at the great banquet, and the king, as was proper, went among them to see how they were faring. All were to be dressed in good clothes, which were given to them as they entered, for in those days the host not only furnished the table, but also the garments of the guests. Among the guests was one who had not on a wedding garment. The king asked him: "How came you in here without a wedding garment?" No doubt he had despised the liberality of the king, and said to himself, "I am well enough in this old, torn, filthy vesture"; and consequently he could offer no excuse for this affront to the king and the rest of the company. So for this offence his feet and hands were tied, and he was cast into the darkness of the night, where there would be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This is the miserable sinner who, not having the grace of God, which is the wedding garment, was covered with the rags and filthy garments of sin and vice. Woe to the sinner who comes before the great King in this condition! This terrible sentence will be literally executed; he shall be thrown into exterior darkness and will hear the words: "Begone from Me, ye accursed, into eternal fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." How terrible it is to be in danger of this judgment! How then should we live, that we may not fall into sin, and deserve to be treated in this way? Many are called, but few are chosen, is the conclusion, and a review of the whole parable: all were invited to the wedding-feast; some stayed away of their own accord, others were punished for appearing in an unbecoming dress, so that there were but few indeed who really enjoyed the feast. That "Many are called, but few are chosen" is true, even we, with our limited intellect, can understand. Do not the great mass of people live in sin? Do not vice and passion flood the face of the earth? Young and old lead sinful lives, and there are few who are really good. Remember that Our Lord once said, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth

to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat"; it is the great boulevard to hell, a road with splendid equipages and full of style, where everybody wants to travel. But the road that leads to paradise is very small and full of thorns; the gate is so narrow that you have to use force to get through. The kingdom of heaven requires violence to get into it, and only the violent will succeed in getting in. Be not overconfident in persuading yourselves that you are making the necessary efforts to gain heaven. St. Paul tells us that with fear and trembling we are to work out our salvation. St. Augustine feared after many years of prayer and penances and says: "I will not encourage you to think yourselves safe when I do not consider myself safe." To be sure of your salvation is a bad sign. St. Gregory tells us: "When the devil wishes to damn us, he gives us a feeling of safety"; and St. Bernard says, "The greater sinners we are the safer we feel."

This thought, then, that the greater part of men are to be damned, should fill our hearts with terror and with a salutary fear. We can certainly belong to the number of the elect if we choose. But let us ask ourselves whether we really choose to be of this number. What must we do? Why do so many Christians perish eternally? Why? Because they are Christians in name only. You must take your affections off the things of this world, fly from sin and bad company, eradicate every vestige of vice from your soul, deny yourselves, love God with all your heart; you must be ready to suffer any persecution rather than sully your souls with mortal sin, and keep the law of God and of the Church most exactly. These are some few of the things that you must do, in order to belong to the number of those who will enter heaven. This is certain, that those who wish to be saved will go to heaven, and those only will go to hell who want to go there. The celestial feast is open to all, the Master invites all, and is anxious that all should be there.

The invited guests that wished to go to the wedding-feast

could go if they wished; all were welcome and lovingly given places at the table; but those who remained away and obstinately resisted repeated invitations did not taste of the feast.

You have good and evil before you; make your choice; if you choose the good, reward will be yours, but if the evil, you have to be content with the punishment due to your perversity.

I will conclude with the words of the Gospel: "Behold, I have prepared My dinner. My beeves and fatlings are killed and all things are ready; come ye to the marriage."

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *John* iv. 46-53. *At that time* there was a certain ruler whose son was sick at Capharnaum. He having heard that Jesus was come from Judea into Galilee, went to him, and prayed him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Jesus therefore said to him: Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not. The ruler saith to him: Lord, come down before that my son die. Jesus saith to him: Go thy way, thy son liveth. The man believed the word which Jesus said to him, and went his way. And as he was going down, his servants met him: and they brought word, saying that his son lived. He asked therefore of them the hour wherein he grew better. And they said to him: Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. The father therefore knew that it was at the same hour that Jesus said to him: Thy son liveth: and himself believed and his whole house.

THE HEALING OF THE SON OF THE RULER AND THE CONVERSION OF HIS WHOLE FAMILY.

THIS miracle took place in Cana of Galilee where Our Lord performed His first miracle of changing water into wine at the marriage-feast. There was there a local ruler who represented Herod, the king, and held authority in a country where enemies were plenty. This ruler had a very sick son who was not expected to recover; the ruler heard of the coming of Our Lord to the place and he set out in his fatherly

solicitude to beg of Him to come to his home and restore his child to health. This ruler knew, of course, that Jesus could do it, but by what power he did not know; he did not know that Jesus was God Himself. But he ascribed to Him a power which was beyond that of man. "You can do it easily, you have only to say a word, and there is nothing impossible to you."

"Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not:" here Our Lord reproved the ruler with a want of sufficient faith; he believed a little, just enough to give him courage to come from his house, and look to Jesus for a cure. This same severe reproof might apply to many Christians; they believe only what suits them. Christianity is not so much a reality as it is a custom, a condition, in which they were born. Doubt is a want of faith. What doubtful propositions and systems do these Christians make for themselves! For instance, as to hell. Many people dispute as to what hell is; they do not know, but some make it a very hot place, while others come to the horrible conclusion that there is no hell; the latter do not want to be troubled by such frightful thoughts of a future life. With them one religion is as good as another; they think that all are in error, and that all try to do a little for man, but in different ways. Fly the company of such Christians, shake off the doubts you may have imbibed, study questions which relate to your religion. St. John the Evangelist once accidentally met Corinthus, the heretic. "Corinthus, the enemy of truth, is here; let us be gone," he said, "lest the house fall upon us." St. Polycarp met the heretic Marcion in Rome; as they came face to face, Polycarp turned away and looked in another direction. Marcion, with bold effrontery, asked, "Do you not know me?" "Yes," Polycarp answered, "I know you to be the first-born of the devil."

It is not only necessary to avoid people who may make you lose your faith; you should not only love this precious gift and keep it safe in your heart, but you must also show it be-

fore the world. How can you do this? You can do it by performing many good works in the spirit of faith. We read that faith without works is dead, and works without faith have no spiritual value. Faith without works is like a body without life, and without breath. As a dead body is no longer a man, so a dead faith is no longer considered faith. A young man who knows that sin is the great evil of the world, and still continues to commit it, cannot be said to have faith. He cannot be said to have faith who knows that God punishes sin with eternal punishment, and yet still remains in sin, though he has the means to put himself in the grace of God. That youth has no faith who knows that God is everywhere, that He sees all things, even the most carefully concealed, and yet contaminates his heart by secret crimes. That young person cannot be supposed to have any faith who, knowing that Christ is ever present on our altars in church, yet behaves as if he were on the street, talking and laughing; not praying himself and disturbing others at their prayers. What is the good of believing in the Catholic Church, and living like a pagan?

My good and faithful followers, "without faith it is impossible to please God," as St. Paul said to the Hebrews. Faith will give life to your souls and will nourish them. If you have a well-grounded, lively faith you will come out victorious from every battle with your passions and sins. You will conquer yourself and your wicked nature.

During a persecution in Japan a young Japanese gave a good example of firm faith. He was advised by his own father to deny the faith, and, refusing, he was compelled to stand without any support, his hands and feet tied firmly. At length, after two days, the tender feeling of the father for his son induced him to loose the bonds. Straightway the youth went to the church of the Jesuits, and the first food he partook of was holy communion. Beg of God, my dear young friends, that you may have a like faith; nourish that faith by reading spiritual books; read lives of the saints and

your catechism; but above all avoid wicked books, which are written to undermine the faith of the unwary.

The ruler mentioned in the Scripture did not heed the reprimand which Our Lord gave him, but continued to pray that Our Lord should hasten lest the ruler's son should die. Here we see the constancy of prayer. The father had a great desire to have his son healed, and while he knew Our Lord could do it, he believed that if he continued to ask his petition would be granted. Such also should be our prayers. Have a great desire to do something for the greater glory of God and for your own special benefit and then be constant in your petitions. How cold and careless our young people are at their prayers! They have no spiritual wants, and therefore they lack fervor; they realize their temporal wants more easily, and you will find they desire them more fervently. How few, therefore, are there who throw themselves before the altar of God and with sincerity and fervor say, "Lord, save my soul." How few are there, who, knowing that they are in sin, pray with fear and trembling: "Lord, my soul is dead in Thy sight; make me live again. Thou hast delivered me before from the hands of the devil; deliver me again." How few young people are there, who seeing the frequency with which they fall into sin, say fervently to God, "Lord, do Thou keep my mind, my tongue and my hands from falling into sin; give me the grace to avoid the occasions of it and of those companions whom I follow so implicitly." Very rarely are our young people in earnest in their prayers, and that is the reason that they find sin so agreeable, and follow it with such eagerness. At most they say a few "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys" with such a miserable disposition that you would be ashamed to call them prayers. They speak the words of the prayers with their lips, but not with the desire that what they ask for may be granted. Will such young people grow up to be good men and women? Will they continue free from sin? By no means. Without the grace of God, it is impossible to keep from sin,

and you will not receive this grace in answer to such prayers. Let us then, young and old, with real fervor raise our hearts to God, and beg especially for grace to be freed from sin.

When the ruler had again made his demand, Our Lord said, "It is not necessary that I should come down. Go thy way, thy son liveth." The ruler believed the words of Christ, and thanking Him with reverence and gratitude, returned to Capharnaum. On the way he met messengers who had been sent to tell him that his son lived. He asked them at what hour the child became better, and they told him at the seventh hour, the same hour at which Our Lord had said, "Go, thy son liveth." This miracle convinced the ruler that Jesus was the Son of God. When he arrived home he found every one rejoicing. He told them of his meeting with the Messias, and showed them clearly that the healing of the child was due to Him. All were convinced, and all believed. Let me, my dear young people, make just one more remark: Why did this pagan ruler go to Our Lord? By what means were his eyes opened to the faith? It was certainly by his son's danger. It was the grief in which he found himself. This trial, which to all appearances made him unhappy, was the cause of his joy. Had it not been for the sickness of his son he would not have thought of going to Christ; he would have remained in his unbelief, and he would not have embraced the faith. This should teach us that the misfortunes of this life, the trials which we sometimes have to undergo, are often great graces which Our Lord offers us, for these trials detach our hearts from earth, raise them to heaven, and force us to throw ourselves on the mercy of God. St. Gregory tells us, "That the evils that oppress us force us to go to God." See that strong, healthy young man; he enjoys his youth without concern; he is off with his wicked companions, to lie about in idleness, to commit sin without remorse. God strikes him with sickness, and he is thrown on his bed, battling for his life. What a misfortune that a young man in the flower of his youth should be so stricken! Yes, it is a

great misfortune in one way, but looked at in another light, it is a blessing. He sins no more; he has time to think that God has sent this affliction to make him better, and in this way he is put on the path to heaven. "A great sickness sobers the mind." The same may be said of all other trials that come to us. Great or small, they are all graces sent to wake us up to a new life. God sends us trials because we are dear to Him. "Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth." St. Ignatius says, "If God makes you suffer much, it is a sign that He wants to make a great saint of you, and if you wish to become great saints, pray God that He may let you suffer much." If you find that God sends you these trials for your sins, repent of them, and bear the suffering with resignation. If you know that you are as good as you can be, and still you suffer, thank God for it. Remember that your crown will be more beautiful when the time of your reward has come. Do not forget that God is a good father, who will not try you beyond your strength, but that He, Himself, with His great consolations, will help you bear the burden.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Gospel. *Matt.* xviii. 23-35. *At that time Jesus spoke to his disciples this parable:* The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king who would take an account of his servants. And when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents. And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. But that servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with pity, let him go, and forgave him the debt. But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants that owed him a hundred pence: and laying hold on him, he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest. And his fellow-servant, falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he paid the debt.

Now his fellow-servants, seeing what was done, were very much grieved, and they came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him: and said to him: Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT OF THE KING.

EVERY rational creature has to give an account of his actions for the time that he is on probation. We human beings are in this world on probation, and when this life is over we have to show God and the angels of heaven that we have lived commendable lives. To prove this Our Lord spoke this parable. Ten thousand talents were given to a servant by his master, that he might make use of them: he could buy, or sell, or lay out the money in speculation in any way he pleased. In the course of time, he forgot that he was a servant, and had to give an account of all his operations. The youth of our day live on in a similar way; they use their youth, their body, their time and their faculties as if they were absolute masters of them, and had not to give an account to God. Sometimes, by the mercy of God, they recognize the fact that they are burdened with a tremendous debt which they cannot pay off; that they have squandered the talents that were given them; for, remember, all have talents, and all have to make return for the outlay.

In the case of the servant mentioned in the Gospel there was no return: what could the poor miserable man do but fall down before his creditor, acknowledge the debt, and beg forgiveness of him who is so rich that he will not feel the loss of ten thousand talents. "Have patience with me," give me another chance, advance more talents for my use, and you will see that I shall do better. I will repay the debt, and besides show a great gain. O, my dear friends, how

serious a thing life is! What are your obligations? What talents have you received? You are preparing for your first communion, or for Confirmation and you are doing so honestly and piously; you go on retreat, review your whole life, and make a general confession. With tears you acknowledge that you have offended God grievously, but God has forgiven you, and the memory of your offences is blotted out. With a light heart, thankful that you escaped so easily, you go forth to your accustomed duties in the world where you meet many fellow-servants that serve the great Master and serve one another too. You meet there one who owes you a few pennies, who has offended you but slightly, and you get very angry at his carelessness in not returning what he borrowed; you take him by the throat as if you would choke him; he begs you to have patience with him, using almost the same words as you did to God. But you demand immediate payment, and as he cannot comply with your demand, you have him cast into prison.

Many have obtained the pardon of their sins and are freed from their debts by the great Owner of all things; they have been on the point of receiving just punishment, but by their prayers and promises of doing better they get a respite. Perverse beings that they are, they do wrong again; they are no better, they again commit the very sins for which they were called to account, the sins which have been pardoned.

At the encounter of the two servants mentioned in the Gospel, where one treated the other most unmercifully, there were present several witnesses, who reported the case to the king. The king reversed the sentence against the debtor of ten thousand talents, and inflicted on him the same punishment which he had meted out to his fellow-servant. The conclusion which Our Lord Himself drew from this parable was, that His heavenly Father would do in a like manner to every one who did not forgive his brother from his heart. Let us here reflect on our unwillingness to pardon the faults of others. Remember that you will not obtain forgiveness

of your sins unless you sincerely forgive your neighbor. Before asking the forgiveness of our own faults, let us fully pardon our neighbor, and not keep anything in our heart against him. Nay, you must do even more if you would follow out the mandates of Our Lord, for He has said, "Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you."

In the king who forgave his servant that enormous sum of money, we recognize the infinite mercy and kindness of God; where the king inflicts great punishment on his servant for his cruelty, we see the justice of God. Would that we understood the just vengeance of God on those who abuse His goodness. Knowing His infinite mercy do we not frequently commit sin the more easily, in the expectation of being forgiven in the sacrament of confession? You confess every month, but still the same sins are told; promises are made, but you fall again into the same grievous faults. You mock the justice of God, and pretend to be sorry, and then multiply the number of the same sins. You may say that you are weak, human creatures and that in spite of all your good resolutions you fall again and again. Yes, you are weak, because you are slaves to certain sins; you are weak because you do not guard your eyes; you are weak because you do not avoid the occasions of sin. Just there lies your weakness. With the grace of God, you could be strong; stronger than your passions: you would also be made stronger by prayer, and by going to the sacraments more frequently.

St. Anthony the abbot once saw a whole legion of devils advancing upon him to frighten him by its numbers. "Why," asked he, "do you come in such crowds against a poor, miserable man, when one of you could easily overcome him? All the powers of hell cannot affect me in the least if I am fortified by the grace of God; therefore, I fear you not, because I know that the Lord will fight my battles for me; I despise you all." And with his staff he drove the infernal multitude away.

St. Teresa, inspired by divine love, used to say: "I feel

no fear when I can say, 'My God, my God, I am afraid.'" When St. Martin was on his death-bed, the devil appeared to him. "What are you doing here, impure beast?" asked the saint. "You will find nothing in me that belongs to me; the bosom of Abraham will be my resting-place." This is the way to be strong: strong in the confidence and help of almighty God.

My dear young friends, how great are our debts to almighty God! Many of us can say, "So young, and still so great a sinner!" What a tremendous debt does that young person owe to almighty God, who curses, steals, and is disobedient; who drinks to excess and commits shameful crimes. Full of confusion for the debt which you have contracted, beg that you may be spared until the whole be paid; but be sure not to burden your soul again, as God is not only good and merciful, but He is also just. St. Augustine says that God's forgiveness is limited. Judas publicly confessed his sin of betraying Our Lord, saying, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." He carried back to the high priest the money he had received for the vile act, and falling into despair, went and hanged himself.

Now is the time of your salvation. If your sins be as numerous as the sands on the seashore God is willing to forgive you. Who knows whether God will forgive your future sins? How many are now in hell who committed only one mortal sin! There is a story told of a young man who lived an angelic life. But one day he heard one of his companions tell of a shameful sin and he felt a desire to commit it at the first opportunity that presented itself; that night in his sleep he burst a blood-vessel and died. His confessor consoled the father of the boy, and told him he need have no fear, for the young man had led such a good life that he was sure he had gone straight to heaven. The following night the soul of the youth appeared to his confessor, and said, "Do not pray for me, for I am damned; your prayers avail me nothing." "How is that?" asked the priest. "I went regularly to confession,"

he answered, "but the day before yesterday, I consented in my mind to a revolting sin, and resolved to commit it at the first opportunity. For that one sin I am in hell." Whether this ever happened cannot be proven, but the principles of the condemnation are correct. Let the sins of the past be enough for us, that past life so badly spent! It is time that we stopped the insults we have heaped on God's majesty. Let us say with St. Margaret of Cortona: "My Jesus, I have committed up to this time sins enough; give me the grace hereafter never to commit any more."

Thus the great King, our God, whose servants we are, will pardon us our faults when He asks us in the confessional for an accounting. He will forget what we owe Him, and will still consider us His faithful servants. And at the great judgment He will ratify His decision and will bring us to our heavenly reward.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* xxii. 15-21. *At that time* the Pharisees going, consulted among themselves how to ensnare Jesus in his speech. And they sent to him their disciples with the Herodians, saying: Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou dost not regard the person of men: tell us therefore what dost thou think. Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said: Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites? Show me the coin of the tribute. And they offered him a penny. And Jesus saith to them: Whose image and inscription is this? They say to him: Cæsar's. Then he saith to them: Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.

THE LEGALITY OF THE TRIBUTE TO CÆSAR.

THOUGH the Pharisees often heard the instructions of Our Lord, they never drew any benefit from them. On this day they came to Our Lord, and proposed this question to Him, "Tell us, what dost Thou think. Is it lawful to give tribute

to Cæsar, or not?" In this way, instead of trying to learn something of benefit to their souls, they became more blind. They were full of hatred of Our Lord, and full of jealousy because the people considered Him a prophet, and their intention was to destroy the respect which the multitude had for Him. Here was a question which they thought would certainly lead Our Lord into their meshes. "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar?" The Jews hated the Roman dominion over them; they were a downtrodden race, and were obliged to furnish a throne and money for the Roman governor, while their religion was in confusion; and sometimes two high-priests were contending for the chief office. So the Pharisees said to themselves, "If this man consents to pay tribute to Cæsar he will be hated by the people; and if on the contrary he disapproves of it, the government will have a case against him for inciting the people to resist lawful authority." Jesus confounded the Pharisees by His divine wisdom. "Why do you tempt Me, ye hypocrites?" He asked. You have a very bad reason for this question—you are not honest. Our Lord was affable and kind to the greatest sinners who came to Him in the sincerity of their hearts; but with these double-faced Pharisees He had no patience. He called them vipers, impostors, whitened sepulchres, fair without, but most loathsome within. Does not Our Lord teach us here the hatefulness of the vice of hypocrisy, and how He detested it?

My dear young friends, there are hypocrites among Christians, among our youth. Many young people wish to appear like angels in the eyes of their superiors; before their parents they are careful not to say a bad word, while with their companions they do and say most scandalous things. They hide their sins so carefully that no one suspects them of any wickedness: even in the confessional they do not make known their great sins, and deceive the priest, the minister of God. There are hypocrites everywhere; in the sanctuary, in the choir, in sodalities, in the church, and at the sacraments. Never pretend to a devotion that you have not—it is disgust-

ing. Be not servers of the eye of man, but serve God in all sincerity. Men may praise you for your piety, honesty, and truthfulness, but God sees deep into the heart; you do not deceive God. You may gain some temporal advantages by deceiving men, but God's time for punishment will come, and then to your shame, your hypocrisy will be made manifest to the world. We read in Job that, "dissemblers and crafty men provoke the wrath of God."

"Show me the coin of the tribute," said Our Lord. "Whose image and inscription is this?" He asked. They answered, "Cæsar's." Then He said, "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." The Pharisees were struck with the wisdom of the reply, and must have been covered with shame before the assembled multitude. St. Bonaventure asserts that this coin represents the soul of man, impressed with the image of God. A precious thing, of great value, is the soul in the eyes of God, and it derives its value from the blood of Christ. Our soul, my dear young friends, when gifted with the grace of the Redeemer is a most beautiful object; it is an angel hidden in a body of flesh, a beautiful spirit, radiant with thought and understanding. A soul in mortal sin has impressed on it the image of the devil. "What has become of me?" St. Augustine asks. "My soul, whither have your sins led you?" That bright image of God which was on you is there no longer; all is changed. "How has the gold changed its color!" Bewail your condition, my dear young people, if you should find yourselves in a state of sin. St. Jerome says, most lamentingly, "This I bewail, that you do not feel that you are dead; this I bewail, that you do not sorrow for yourselves."

Yes, young people who are in sin ought to weep continually; at night instead of closing their eyes in sleep, they ought to keep them open to shed tears; they ought not be able to eat, play or study,—so great should be their concern. But do they weep? Oh no! these miserable blind beings enjoy themselves, and never stop to think that God hates them. Oh,

raise your eyes to the crucified Saviour, see His thorn-crowned head—has He not sacrificed it for your soul? Those blood-stained eyes, those colorless lips, those hands pierced with nails, those feet cruelly wounded and that side opened by a lance—did He not sacrifice all for our salvation? Are you going to allow His sacred Passion to be wasted so far as you are concerned? Jesus has purchased you with His blood, and you are His if you remain faithful to Him. "Take great care of your souls," and Jesus will be satisfied with His purchase and will not consider His Passion too great a price for your soul.

"Give to God the things that are God's." Let us, for a moment, think of this. What do we owe God, that we must give Him? To God we owe honor and glory. Do we give this glory to God? Do we not give honor rather to men, to those especially who hold positions of dignity. When you enter the magnificent palace of the millionaire, how well-dressed you are, what politeness you assume, so that people may consider you well-bred; you tiptoe up the hall and in a humble whisper ask the servant to take in your card, to see whether you may be admitted; should you have the happiness of an audience, you hardly speak aloud and you put your demands in the most honeyed words. If such is our respect for men, what is not due to almighty God from a human being? Give to God, therefore, a little of the respect which you show to creatures.

God does not wish for a false respect. He wishes you to be free, gracious, and spontaneous in your worship of Him; to assume a pious attitude in church because you are watched is not a worship of God; to say your prayers night and morning for form's sake, or because your parents insist on it, is hardly to be considered meritorious; for it is an unwilling prayer. Does God consider these acts worthy of Him when they are forced from you? He will not look at them with pleasure. He will say to you as He said to the Jews of old, "You celebrate great feasts, and hold certain days solemn, but

they are not My feasts, they are yours, because you want them for your own purposes and not for My glory; they excite My indignation but not My mercy toward you." This forced devotion is similar to the mock adoration which the Jews and soldiers offered Our Lord in the hall of Pilate's palace, when they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and made genuflections before Him; and at the cross, when the Jews cried out: "Let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe Him." God looks at the heart. He pays little attention to our exterior actions; a good, strong, fervent, cordial intention is as good in the eye of God as is the execution of the noblest human action. Give then to God the honor and glory that are due to Him; there is no need to force the youth who is in earnest to honor God in church, or when he hears Mass or goes to the sacraments; he does it of his own free will and with the greatest devotion. Yes, my dear young people, give to God that honor, freely, not through routine or custom. With a great heart, give glory to God. Serve Him with a great heart, joyfully and with alacrity, and then you can say with truth that you have given to God the things that are God's.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOSPEL. *Matt.* ix. 18-26. *At that time* as Jesus was speaking these things unto them, behold a certain ruler came up and adored him, saying: Lord, my daughter is even now dead: but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus rising up, followed him with his disciples. And behold a woman who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. For she said within herself: If I shall touch only his garment, I shall be healed. But Jesus turning and seeing her, said: Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus was come into the house of the ruler, and saw the minstrels and the multitude making a rout, he said: Give place, for the girl is not dead but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. And when the multitude was put forth, he went in: and took her by the hand.

And the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that country.

THE RAISING TO LIFE OF THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS.

JUST before the facts related in this Gospel took place, Our Lord had been defending Himself against the attacks of the Scribes and Pharisees. These people did not love Our Lord, because He would not adopt their ways of thinking and acting; He had not joined or supported them in their pretensions; they thought it was wrong for Our Lord to eat with publicans and sinners, and His disciples did not keep the fasts which were prescribed. And another abomination these followers of Christ were guilty of: they did not wash their hands before they ate bread.

The daughter of Jairus had just died. The father came in haste to Our Lord, and begged Him to resuscitate her. Our Lord might have denied his petition, for Jairus was a Pharisee, and was the very one that got so angry because the divine Master had been working miracles on the Sabbath-day. Our Lord might have remembered all those insults, and denied the ruler's request; but the heart of Jesus is great and loving even to the ungrateful. Our Lord shows us the same love, though we often deserve punishment. Lo, there is a youth who falls into a very serious fault, and becomes the enemy of Jesus Christ. Would not he deserve to be punished at once for his treason? But, no. Our Lord waits for him, has patience, coaxes and threatens, until there is a change—either confirmed obstinacy in sin, or a conversion.

While Our Lord was proceeding to the house of Jairus a great crowd followed Him; they knew what He was about to do and they wanted to be witnesses of this great miracle. Our Lord was closely pressed on all sides, and behold! secretly a poor, sick woman made her way to Him, and touched the hem of His garment. She said to herself with faith and confidence: "If I can only get near enough to touch Him I will be healed; it will not be necessary to claim His ex-

clusive attention. A touch will do." So with great difficulty she pressed forward through the crowd; she was just able to touch the hem of His garment, and with that she was healed. But Our Lord did not wish that this great act of faith should go unnoticed, for it might serve as an example to others. Our Lord turned around and asked who had touched Him. "Master," said the people, "you see the great crowd that surrounds you, and you ask who has touched you?" "Yes," said Our Lord, "somebody touched Me, for I felt the healing virtue go from Me." In the meanwhile the poor woman, as if she had done something wrong, acknowledged what she had done, and Our Lord said, "Be of good heart, daughter; thy faith hath made thee whole." Faith in Christ is very powerful; humble faith in Him will not be disappointed.

If the simple touch of Our Lord's garment could work such a miracle, what should not the reception of the body and blood of Our Lord do for us when we receive Jesus Christ into our hearts? What do we expect, what good shall we derive from this intimate relationship, what benefit will we obtain in holy communion? St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi used to say that one communion, properly made, is enough to make a saint. But how many communions does it take to make saints of us! How slow is our improvement because it is not with a lively faith that we eat this bread of angels. No, we do not realize that this is Jesus, the good Master, before whom we ought to sink down and say, "My Lord and my God!" Purify your heart from all sin with earnestness; dispose your soul to be humble with love, and you will obtain great benefit from your communions.

My dear young friends, approach Our Lord and touch the hem of His garment, not like the crowd that jostled Him, but like that poor afflicted woman. Touch Our Lord as St. Philip Neri did, who often at the elevation of the Host and sacred chalice, held the consecrated species as high as he could reach and held it there until his arms were tired. In consuming the sacred blood, he drained every drop from the

chalice in such ecstasy that after his communion he was totally bereft of his senses and only after a long time came to himself again. Touch Our Lord as St. Catharine of Sienna did, whose consolation at communion was so great that she relished no joy like it, and such strength did she derive from communion that for weeks she took no other food. The day on which she did not go to communion seemed to her a lost day on earth. Touch Him in holy communion like Juliana Veronica did when at ten years of age she made her first communion; she felt her soul all inflamed with the sacred presence, and as she could not account for it, in her simplicity she asked the Sisters if this was always the effect of communion. Sometimes she saw the sacred species shining bright as a star. An acquaintance of mine, a very pious old man, once said to me, "Father, I am afraid to go to communion every day, because I am not worthy, but unless I go, I feel that something is wrong." O, lively and ardent faith! a clear proof that Our Lord is present in the Blessed Sacrament. "He who eats this bread shall live forever."

When Our Lord arrived at the house of the ruler of the synagogue, he found there a great crowd of people—as is customary on such sad occasions, and they were making great lamentations. He put them all out of the room and told them to give up these lamentations, for the girl "is not dead, but sleepeth." Our Lord then went in and closed the door. He wished to perform this miracle without witnesses. Any one that wanted glory from such an action, if he could do it, would have said, "Now my dear people, see she is dead. Assure yourselves of the fact; feel whether there is a pulse or any sign of life." The humble Jesus did not do this. The girl was dead indeed, but her death was to be of such short duration that it was but a sleep. He was there with His almighty power to wake her up. The proud people of this world wish their good actions to be known by everybody, and the praise of the deed must be in the mouth of all.

Another lesson that Our Lord wanted to teach us is, that

His followers that depart this life are not dead, but asleep in the Lord, and this is the reason that the Church has adopted such expressions as "He fell asleep in the Lord"; "Lazarus, our friend, sleeps." These expressions are taken from the Scriptures and designate the view the Holy Ghost takes of the death of the faithful.

This peace of which the dead are in possession becomes the share of the just on this earth. Nothing afflicts them. If they have committed sins, they know that the blood of Christ has washed them away, and that God considers them no longer; they care not for the world nor its honors, and when they do not have them they are not disturbed. "The world is crucified to them." They are happy to depart from this world, like the prisoner who is glad to escape from confinement; happy that the chains of their slavery to the things of this earth are struck off. They rejoice that heaven is so near. The just man does not fear the future, because he is sure of the mercy of God; he thinks of God, speaks of God and awaits His call. There is nothing sad about the death of a good man, when viewed in the proper light; though oppressed with misfortune there is real happiness in his face and joyfulness in his actions; all the dark thoughts disappear when he takes the crucifix in his hands, embraces it, and invokes the name of Jesus and of our Mother Mary. He is sure of heaven. St. Edmund had a great devotion to Mary from his childhood; when near death he said: "How beautiful it is to die in the protection of Mary, of whom I never asked anything but it was granted." What a happiness is it to the dying man when the sacrament of love, the Holy Eucharist, is brought to him for his last food, his viaticum, to give him strength for that great journey to an unknown world, to receive that Jesus who has been so often his comfort in life; in a short time he will see that same Jesus in heaven, no longer hidden under the sacramental veil. In this manner the Church with its sacraments comforts her faithful followers, detaches them gently from the things of this world, and raises

their minds and their hearts to heaven and God. Could not the dying Christian say to his weeping friends that surround his death-bed: "O how beautiful heaven is, how magnificent is its glory! And you, my friends, do not wish me to go there! You would rather keep me in this exile. Give me heaven."

A hermit was once at the point of death, and he spoke in this manner, to the edification of all: "I thank you, my eyes, for the services you have done me in my life, for you have been fountains of tears for my sins. Now look up to heaven, close to the things of this earth; my hands, I thank you for having helped in the castigation of my body. Now you shall do glorious things for God in heaven. Blessed lips, hereafter praise God in heaven."

Do you, my dear young people, wish to die the death of the just? Then live well; it is not possible to come to a good death through a bad life, unless by a miracle, and miracles are very rare. St. Paul, the first hermit, prayed day and night on his knees and, as a reward, was found dead in the same position. Many of you are still innocent; what a beautiful death yours will be, if you remain so to the end of your lives! Innocence is beautiful in the eyes of God. If you wish to preserve that innocence, pray much. Have recourse to the sacraments, and have a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. She will assist you now, and at the hour of your death. Now, as a conclusion to this sermon, as well as at the conclusion of your life, make one great sacrifice, one great resolution that will do you good and be a glory to God; that is to be faithful to your holy religion in all its laws and practices, and you will close your eyes in peace, and your death will be precious in the sight of God; then all evil and all temptation will be over, and you will be in the possession of God.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Gospel. *Matt.* xxiv. 15-35. *At that time, Jesus said to his disciples:* When you shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, he that readeth let him understand: then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains. And he that is on the house-top, let him not come down to take anything out of his house: and he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat. And wo to them that are with child, and that give suck in those days. But pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the sabbath: for there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be. And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved: but for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say to you: Lo here is Christ, or there, do not believe him. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect. Behold I have told it to you beforehand. If therefore they shall say to you: Behold he is in the desert: go ye not out: Behold he is in the closets, believe it not. For as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even unto the west: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together. And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be moved. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty. And he shall send his angels with a trumpet, and a great voice: and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them. And from the fig-tree learn a parable: when the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see all these things, know ye that it is nigh, even at the doors. Amen I say to you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

THE END OF THE WORLD.

The Apostles had asked Our Lord concerning the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, and so important did it ap-

pear, that He made them understand, that, to a certain degree, it was the foreshadowing of the end of the world. The catastrophe which is to destroy this world and all its inhabitants must certainly be fearful, and the destruction of Jerusalem was a foreboding of it. The great sign which is to show that the end is near, is that there is to be abomination in the Temple itself. When any one, then, stands in the holy place and sees that filth, neglect and dishonor has come upon it he may conclude that the end is near.

By this abomination of desolation in the holy place is understood literally, the profanation of the Temple. A multitude of soldiers rushed into the sacred precincts, and with fire and sword destroyed everything. Many were killed there and the court of the Temple, a refuge and a place of safety for the persecuted, flowed with blood. Jerusalem had become a picture of hell. A furious army besieged the city, and terrible famine was the consequence; men tore one another like dogs: for after having fought the Romans, dissensions arrayed them against one another, and soon their blood-stained swords were turned to fratricidal slaughter. Mothers forgot their motherly feelings to such an extent that they consumed their own children for food; those who made an effort to escape were caught to the number of five hundred a day, and were crucified before the gates of the city. This terrible spectacle, however, did not frighten them, for notwithstanding it, many attempted to get out in order to look for a little food. Outside the walls of the city it looked like a forest of crosses. Such was the terrible judgment against this city: Many died on crosses as a punishment for the crucifixion of Our Lord.

The Fathers of the Church who have explained this part of the Scriptures say that by the abomination of desolation is meant mortal sin. Our body, as the Apostle tells us, is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and God wishes to inhabit it. He wants to make a holy of holies of our bodies and souls. What would you think of a sacrilegious thief who would come into

the church and despoil the tabernacle and defile the holy altar? What a profanation it would be considered to scatter the consecrated Host torn from its resting-place by sacrilegious hands. Would we not be furious at such a desecration? We would be indignant, and would want to punish the culprit severely; and yet this is what that one does who desecrates his own soul. He drives Our Lord Jesus out of his heart, takes hold of Him and forces Him out like an intruder. He has to yield His place to the devil. What a change there is in that soul; would that you could see it. Then you would realize why the Scripture calls such souls vipers, dogs, and swine.

What would you think, then, my dear young people, if, after having committed a sin of impurity, you found yourself changed into an unclean animal? But you are even worse than this, for you are changed into a devil. Our Lord says, "You are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you will do." You have in your face the face of the devil; in your blood is his blood. Would you be delighted with such a transformation? What a horrible thing it is to think that you are not only sons of the devil, but are sons of hell; that is, you are destined for that place where the devils live for all eternity. In order to live far from sin and from the abomination it causes in us, Our Lord teaches us that we should avoid the occasions of sin by flying from its neighborhood. For He told His disciples, "When you see these things about to come to pass, those who are in Judea, should flee to the mountain, and he that is on the house-top, should not come down to take anything out of his house." Our Lord commands a most sudden flight from all that might lead to sin. This measure of prudence is little relished by Christians, for they live blindly on in their sins; they will not listen to the wise words of Ecclesiasticus, "He that loves danger shall perish in it."

What, my dear young people, is your greatest occasion of sin? Your companions are, probably, the greatest source of

peril to you; avoid especially those companions who speak against modesty. A young man is generally good until he falls in with bad companions, and then there is a wonderful change. After that he does not go to Mass on Sunday, confession is given up as well as holy communion. He is a totally different person from what he was before he met those bad companions.

It is related that there was in a certain city a virtuous young man, who went to a neighboring town to a picnic. Usually he kept good company, but on this occasion he met an acquaintance who was unscrupulous and of loose morals. He should have been on his guard against him, but he thought lightly of the danger just then. The conversation was on indifferent topics at first, but gradually they became more interested, and plans were made to commit a sin of impurity; he fell into the sin, and into disgrace in after life.

Our Lord warns us, too, against putting off our conversion from one day to another, as many do. He tells us that the woman about to give birth to a child, or who is suckling an infant is to be pitied, because she cannot fly. Pray, too, He says, that your flight be not on a Sunday or in bad weather. Woe to them if they put off their flight on account of these difficulties. Woe to those who defer their conversion, who refuse to change their lives and are determined to wait until old age or a grave sickness overtakes them, or till the end of their days. Woe to those who neglect to rectify the bad confessions made in the past, or those unworthy communions, or to repair the scandal by which they ruined so many. Woe to him who comes to the end of his life and then recognizes the fact that he has led a very bad life. Will those be really converted who wait to the end of their days? They think that then they will sin no more and they are right; for on account of sickness, they will no longer be able to indulge in their evil habits. We read in the Psalms that those that put off their conversion to the evening of their life will suffer hunger like dogs. Many different interpretations are given of these

words, but here is a beautiful and spiritual one: "Thou," said Our Lord to the sinner, "hast treated Me like a dog in your days. Now I will treat you in the same manner." How are dogs treated? They come to the table of the master, whine, and beg for a morsel. Do you give them the best you have on your plate? No. You give them a bone, or something that you do not want to eat yourself. When we sin we treat God in the same way. We contemptuously throw Him something to keep Him quiet; we give Him the worst we have, as if it were good enough for Him; we are determined to enjoy our youth in sin and throw to God the remainder of our days, of old age, sickness and feebleness. But God is not content with that. Does God owe you His grace at that time of life? At no time of your life have you a right to it and certainly not at the end of your days, when you have done nothing to deserve it. My dear young people, impress this fact well on your minds, that your wasted days and opportunities will verify the words of Our Lord, which you may read in the Gospel—that we shall look for Him and shall not find Him, and we shall die in our sins.

Yes, my dear young friends, firmly persuade yourselves of this generally accepted truth. "As your life so shall be your death." He who leads a bad life will also die a bad death. "As the tree is felled, so will it lie." The sinner is the tree, cut down by almighty God, and he will lie where he has fallen. St. Jerome had the boldness to say that out of ten thousand sinners waiting till the end of their days, one may be converted and saved. Then do not walk in the path of iniquity, because when you wish to correct your bad habits you may not have the grace to do so. St. Augustine says, "It is the just judgment of God, that he who could have acted well and did not act well will lose the power of doing well, when he desires it." The time of sickness and death is not a good time to change your mode of life. It is arrogance, it is presumption. I hope and pray that no such blind and obstinate people are among you. *Now* is the acceptable time; hate and detest your sins

now and dedicate the rest of your days to the service of God and the practice of religion. May God give us all a precious death in His sight.

THE FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

(December 25.)

Gospel. *Luke* ii. 1-14. *At that time:* There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus the governor of Syria: And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger: because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will.

Who does not rejoice with a holy joy on this great feast, when we celebrate with the Church the appearance of the Son of the eternal Father, our most amiable Redeemer! Behold the expectation of ages has at last made His appearance among us! Come then, all ye Christian nations, to see the new-born Messias, and prostrate yourselves in adoration before Him. Adore Him with Mary, His Virgin Mother; with St. Joseph, His foster-father; with the angels who surround the manger, and

sing "Glory to God in the highest." O mystery of divine love, that a God should descend from heaven and become man for us! St. Francis of Assisi, while giving a discourse on this very subject, was so moved that he could not utter another word, and he and his audience wept floods of tears. My dear young people, I also feel moved on this subject, and would rather give a sermon in tears than in words, when I think that God so loves the world that His eternal Son became a mere infant for us. O what can I do to set your hearts on fire for Him? I confess I am not equal to the task; but with the aid of the Child Jesus, I will relate in a few words the history of His birth, and make some humble and loving comments on it. Who knows but that you will be touched by the great condescension of our good Lord, and may offer Him a few tears of gratitude!

Let us go, my dear young friends, to Bethlehem, and ask the shepherds who were so privileged as to hear the first news of the birth of Christ from the angels, what they saw and heard. "Oh joy and gladness!" they will say. "We have seen the new-born King, we have seen the Child, the most beautiful of the world, wrapped in swaddling-clothes; we have heard His childish cries, and falling down in adoration we have kissed His sacred feet with the greatest veneration. O if you could see how beautiful He is! His rosy cheeks, His golden hair, the pearls of tears in His eyes: all more beautiful than an angel of paradise. Above the Child hover angels, His servants, praising Him, singing hymns of glory and announcing peace to men of good will. We have seen Him born and the choirs of angels praising God." And where is that divine Infant to be found, in a house or in a palace? Oh, He is to be found in a poor stable; He is laid in a manger, wrapped in swaddling-clothes and exposed to the cold air! Two animals, an ox and an ass, keep Him warm with their breath and seem to recognize their Creator. A man with a radiant face, weeping tears of joy, and full of wonder, adores Him. A young mother, in ecstasy, is busied about the little

Child's necessities; she covers Him with what she has about her, to keep away the cold, she kisses His little feet as a recognition that He is her God, and then His face to show that He is her Son. The little Infant holds out His hands toward His Mother, and looks at her with a joyous smile.

Happy shepherds, what were the gifts that you brought to this divine Infant? In our poverty we had but little that we could give; we brought Him fruit, milk, cheese and a young white lamb. If you could have seen that dear Child, with a smile and a grateful look, receive these poor gifts; He appeared to thank us with His cries and to ask us to give Him our hearts with our other gifts. We could hardly tear ourselves away from that dear Child. This is what these poor, simple people would say. But you, my dear young people, what are your thoughts about that holy Child? This poor Child, who is only a few hours old, is the Son of the Most High. Before there was a heaven or an earth, He existed; the home of that Infant is heaven. Though you see Him wrapped in swaddling-clothes, His vesture is a mantle of purest light; though you see Him between two animals, His usual companions are the angels of heaven. This beautiful Child is God; these small members are the strong arms of a God. But if He be God, why is He in such poverty? He is born poor because He wants it so, and to gain our love and confidence. He might have come into the world in a palace, surrounded by servants; but He preferred a manger for His cradle and a little straw for His bed. He wished to begin His infancy in tears. "Oh, truly happy tears," cries out St. Thomas of Villanova, "which obtain for us the pardon of our sins; when we were all lost to God, this Child comes to save us."

But what does this Child of infinite love ask of us in return? He asks gratitude, acknowledgment and love. The shepherds adored Him indeed, but the rest of mankind did not recognize Him. All the inhabitants of Bethlehem turned Him from their doors; "the foxes have holes and the birds

of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." The prophet says, "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel hath not known Me." Even in our time many Christians do not give Him the honor which is His due; they heap insults on Him, blaspheme His sacred name, and live in enmity with Him, or do not believe in Him.

Yes, my dear good children, you understand now that the Child Jesus, in return for the great love He showed us, should have gained all hearts on this earth. How many sinners are there in the world and how many sins are committed by them still! Does this look as if Christ had conquered our hearts? Perhaps more sins than usual are committed on Christmas day. The feasts of the Church seem to give occasion for sin, such as going to places of amusement that are dangerous to morals. But let me beg of you, my dear young people, no longer to be ungrateful to the Child Jesus. See, this little Child God has already begun to suffer for you; He is doing the penance which you refused to do, and which you should not omit. Do you hear the cry of the Child? He is already making reparation for those wicked conversations in which you sometimes indulge. Go now to the manger in which Our Lord is placed, and take a good look at Him. See in what poverty He is placed all for you, and then give yourself up to God. Will you not give your heart, your affection to Him?

Love this little Jesus with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul; no longer give yourself to the devil; be sorry for the past, throw yourself at the feet of Jesus, and make an entire offering of yourself to Him, saying, "Here we are, dear Infant Jesus, at your feet, with our gifts in our hands, the gift of our hearts; but such miserable hearts, that the gift is unworthy of Thee. But, dear Infant, Thou art omnipotent; Thou canst, if we co-operate with Thy grace, make them pure, holy, and acceptable in Thy sight. Thou canst fill them with virtues and then they will be fit gifts for

a God that is in search of souls. We volunteer to give our own souls first, and then we will go forth and gather many others. We now leave our hearts at Thy feet; do not despise them. Thou didst not despise the poor gifts of the shepherds; then take also this gift of our hearts, keep them and make their entrance into heaven sure."

THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD.

(JANUARY 1.)

GOSPEL. *Luke* ii. 21. *At that time:* After eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised: his name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

HERE we are, my dear young friends, at the beginning of a new year. When we look back on the days that have been vouchsafed to us, so full of graces and blessings, we feel that we ought to be filled with gratitude. But when we look at the past, we find that we have frequently done our work badly; that we have outraged God by our carelessness, coldness, and sinfulness. When we consider all this wasted and misspent time, we begin to feel some concern for the future. How ungrateful we have been to God! Many of us have to bewail lost time, time spent in idleness, pastimes, recreations, and useless occupations; yes, even time spent in sin. Let us now correct all this; be sorry for the past and make firm resolutions for the future. As St. Paul tells us, "See how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise but as wise, redeeming the time." In order that you may be convinced of your great ingratitude to God's kindness, and that you may be determined to remedy the past days of the year, let us examine ourselves a little further. How have you spent all the days of your life? How much good might you have done, and yet have omitted it! How many prayers could you have said, but you were careless about them! How often could you have listened to a sermon and you did not make the effort! You could have frequented the sacraments of confession and com-

munion, but your indevotion and coldness kept you away. How many charitable works could you have done! The opportunities for acts of kindness to others are so frequent, and so pleasing to almighty God—and yet you did not perform them. Many and many a day we have lost in looking for recreation, and in performing mere human actions which have no merit attached to them. We read in the Book of Proverbs, "The way of the slothful is as a hedge of thorns."

How have you accomplished the little good you have done? You have said prayers, but in a distracted way and carelessly. You have been to church, but you never thought of the presence of God. You went to hear the word of God, but very little good did you derive from it. And then your sins: of how many have you been guilty? I hope you have not sullied your souls with awful, wicked crimes that make the soul of the youth like hell itself. Can you tell how often you have been disobedient to your superiors; the number of impudent answers given them; the curses, blasphemies against God, the bad example to your companions, those many wilful thoughts against purity? Can you give an account of those wicked words by which you have taught sin to others? What a multitude of sins have you not committed!

We read in St. Luke that a gardener had planted a fig-tree in his garden; one day he went to look at the plants and shrubs and trees with which his garden was stocked. He came to this tree, and saw that it bore no fruit; it was a healthy, green, luxuriant tree, and yet it bore no fruit; like a lazy, well-fed, careless man who takes everything given to him, but makes no return. "Well," said the master, "just look at this tree; for the past three years I have come here and expected at least a little fruit; but there has never been any. Why does this tree take up good space uselessly? Cut it down, and throw it into the fire, and let us have done with it." But the servant said, "Ought you not to try this tree one year more? I will dig about it and cultivate it carefully; perhaps it will surprise us next year."

You, my dear young people, are trees planted by almighty God in the garden of His holy Catholic Church, that you may produce good fruit. Here is a three-year-old tree, and the farmer is tired of waiting. How old are you? You are old enough to have done something long ago. Instead of fruit you have produced thorns. St. Augustine says, "Up to the present I have lived my years badly; they are years lost to me; when I cast a glance on what I have done, my heart fails me, for I see nothing but sin, that cries out against me and rebukes me. My former years have been useless."

All the creatures of the universe, ministers of divine justice, at the sight of your wickedness have been calling on God to be allowed to vindicate His outraged goodness and mercy by inflicting on you death or sickness. But again the goodness of Our Lord put it off. "Allow that tree to stand one year more." Yes, let him have another year; perhaps he will change his mode of life, will sin no more, but will be converted; will become a good tree and produce beautiful fruit. In the meanwhile, however, the good are injured to a certain extent by this delay; that bad tree ruins the good ones. A youth who neglects devotions, no longer goes to the sacraments, and gives scandal to others, gets into a habit of cursing and swearing, is a tree that produces such unwholesome fruit that other souls are brought to death; why should it not be cut down at once? Yes, the divine Justice says, that tree ought indeed to be cut down; but where there is life there is hope. Our Lord says He desires not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted from his ways and live. In the meantime years and months pass by; he continues at enmity with God; but the divine mercy never deserts him; it follows him always, is about him with heavenly inspirations and clear light, which makes him understand that interior voice which is sometimes amiable, sometimes severe: if amiable, it invites him to Our Lord's embrace and promises reward, consolation and peace; if, on the contrary, it is severe, it threatens punishment and death. His pleasures are turned into bitterness;

his conscience gives him no rest, but fills him with a thousand fears; his memory constantly recalls the years of his childish happiness, when he went to church joyfully, and when he prayed to the Blessed Virgin. What joys did he not experience in his prayers! what consolation did he not find in going to holy communion! it was like the peace and happiness of paradise.

Such were the means which the divine goodness used to gain the sinner to God, and perhaps all that time he was hard and obstinate in his sins. Perhaps this may even be your case. And if it is, will you not give over your obstinacy and practise Christian virtue? Go to your Father, your tender Friend, to the loving Jesus who has been waiting for you with such a love and who has stretched out His arms to you, to press you to His bosom. Should there be some among you who ought to think of doing better, they are foolish if they do not profit by the time which God has set for them; for that time will soon pass away and then will come the time of reckoning. "For time shall be no more." Oh, have a little sense, and use it for the purpose of your highest interest, the salvation of your soul. "Whilst we have time let us do good." "Blessed," says St. Philip Neri, "are ye young people that have a long time before you in which to do good." What great good you can do in your youth and strength; the old man has but a short time before him. Do not wait for the night when you cannot work. "The night cometh when no man can work." St. Anthony says that if the damned had the time we throw away, and had another chance to live, they would become saints. If they could return to the earth, would they sleep and fool their time away? No; with the experience gathered in the other world they would work day and night, for they know the value of these occasions to gain merits. Thank divine providence that has watched over you with so great care; pray to the Holy Ghost that He may send into your soul that ray of light which will make known to you how important this opportunity of conversion is; that you may be

inspired by Him with a strong will to persevere in good. With St. Augustine let us exclaim, "Too late, O infinite goodness, too late have we begun to love Thee! O infinite love of God, what did we love, when we did not love Thee? Too late have we known Thee and loved Thee, infinite loveliness of God!"

And you, my good young friends, for good I can consider the most of you to be, who constantly endeavor to conquer your bad inclinations and the temptations of the devil; rejoice on this day, for you have cause to be glad at the merits you have gained and which have been laid up for you in heaven; continue to pray to the Holy Ghost that He may give you the grace of perseverance.

THE EPIPHANY.

(JANUARY 6.)

GOSPEL. *Matt.* ii. 1-12. When Jesus, therefore, was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of king Herod, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him. And king Herod hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him: and assembling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him, in Bethlehem of Juda: for so it is written by the prophet: And thou Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, privately calling the wise men, learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them: and sending them into Bethlehem, said: Go and diligently inquire after the child: and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore him. Who having heard the king, went their way: and behold, the star which they had seen in the East, went before them, until it came and stood over where the child was. And seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down, they adored him; and opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their country.

One day, nearly two thousand years ago, a miraculous star of astonishing brightness appeared in the East. Three pious wise men of the East, kings we are told, since known as the Magi, saw it, and, inspired by heaven, they at once knew that the birth of the long-promised King of the Jews had come to pass, and that they were called upon to adore Him. This star appeared through the infinite goodness of the Messias. Not only did He want the homage of poor shepherds, but He also wanted that of the great and the learned ones of this world. He wished to make known His humble birth to all classes of men, and though He was born in an obscure town, in a stable among the meanest surroundings, He wished that all men should recognize Him as the Messias. On this day, the Epiphany of Our Lord, we should rejoice with a new joy because He made known His birth to all the world. This was the first time that the Gentiles were called, the class to which we belong, for we are not Jews nor descendants of Jews, but descendants of pagans. Let me tell you in a few words how the Magi left their own country and set out to find the Child Jesus; and how we too should go forth in search of this divine Infant, and like the Magi, make Him a fitting offering. The Magi saw the star, knew its meaning and started on their journey without any delay. They abandoned their kingdoms and all their earthly interests and gave themselves up to the guidance of the star.

There is a great lesson in this, my dear young friends; remember that it is necessary to respond to the divine call without delay; you must not say I will do it at some future time; I will go to confession soon; I will repent after a while. You must say I will repent *now*, I will confess my sins *now* and make my peace with God. Woe to the man that does not obey the divine will at once, but continues obdurate in his sins.

When the Magi, after a long journey, arrived in Jerusalem they made the inquiry, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and are

come to adore Him." There reigned at that time in that country King Herod, called the great, not for his magnificent works, but for his vices and enormous crimes. He had heard of the arrival of these men, and their errand, and he was greatly disturbed by it. Are there, he asked, other kings in Judea, am I not the only king of the Jews? Then he called the Scribes and wise men of the law together, and asked them which place the prophets had designated as the birthplace of the Messias. They pointed to the text of the Prophet Micheas, "And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the Ruler in Israel."

These words struck terror into Herod's heart, but he concealed his fears, and having called the Magi to the palace, he asked them the time of the star's appearance; he then told them that the new King was to be born in Bethlehem; that they should go there, and search for Him, and when they had found Him, to return to him (Herod) so that he also could go and adore Him. What a hypocrite Herod was! He had resolved in his heart to murder that Child, but before the Magi he puts on the appearance of humility, piety and devotion, in order to succeed the better in his dark designs. The murder of the innocents clearly showed what would have been the fate of the new-born King had He fallen into Herod's hands. This divine Child, O Herod, has many ways of guarding Himself against thy bloodthirsty plans, and even though He escape your cruelty the chastisement of heaven will fall upon you; so great will be your pains that in your anguish you will seek relief in suicide, and when this life is over, hell will be your eternal habitation!

My dear young friends, are there any Herods among you, who outwardly profess piety and devotion, but inwardly are resolved on the spiritual destruction of the innocent? Those who sully their tongues with vile language and then, unrepentant and uncorrected, receive the immaculate Lamb on that same tongue? Ah! if there be such here, let the fate

of the impious Herod be a warning to them; for God's vengeance will not fail to follow them.

After the Magi had heard Herod's announcement, they went on toward Bethlehem, and raising their eyes to heaven saw there the guiding star, which beckoned them to follow. They were filled with inexpressible joy at this favor of God, and started once more on their journey.

The joy of the Magi was great because now they knew they were on the right road. If you have trodden the way of vice and sin and have wandered far from God, you will never feel true peace and happiness. As Isaias says, "There is no peace to the wicked." The Magi journeyed on with a light step until they reached the city of Bethlehem, and going through the winding streets, the star stood over a poor hut, as if to say, here is the spot in which you will find the new-born King; here your journey ends. What a building in which to look for the King of the Jews! Nothing but a stable, a cave which served as a refuge for animals. What did the Magi think when they stood there, and what did they say? Did they turn to one another and say we have been duped, and thus ends this great farce? Our modern scientific and learned philosophers would certainly have said so, but the Magi were a different people; they were pagans, it is true, but they had learned on their journey all about God; and now that they were there before this miserable stable, their faith was not shaken. They entered the place and found the Child Jesus, seated on the knees of the Blessed Virgin. He held out His little arms to His visitors, welcoming them, and bidding them approach. A supernatural power forced them to see that this Child was God, the Messias, the King of the Jews, and falling down they adored Him. What a beautiful sight, to see the wise men show their love of God! We are often too proud to show any signs of religion; it seems as if a little wickedness is acceptable to all. Then the Magi brought out their treasures and their offerings; gold, incense, and myrrh, which were the products of their country. They were allowed to

kiss the feet of the Infant, and they wept in sympathy at the poverty of the Child and His Mother.

Like the Magi, we, too, must offer gifts to the new-born Babe of Bethlehem. What gifts are most grateful to Him? Let us give Him our hearts, but before we give them let us cleanse them by contrition and confession. This little Child will help us to purify our souls so that they will be as pure as refined gold, and as valuable. Let us then arise, and carrying our hearts in our hands, hold them out to Him. He will gladly accept them, He will bless us, and give us that peace which we can find only in God.

Behold us, O dear Child Jesus, prostrate at Thy feet; willingly we offer Thee our hearts, poor ones as they are; but Thou wilt make them suitable to Thyself. Of ourselves we promise that we will never again offend Thee. The bad habits we have indulged in will, by Thy grace, be eradicated, so that we may live better lives. Accept these cold hearts, inflame them with Thy sacred love; make them desire to love Thee sincerely, so that from this glorious day we may do nothing but what is to Thy greater glory.

CANDLEMAS DAY.

(FEBRUARY 2.)

GOSPEL. *Luke* ii. 22-32. *At that time:* After the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they carried him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord. And to offer a sacrifice according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law: he also took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said: Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in

peace: because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Let us follow Mary, with the Child Jesus in her arms. When the time of purification had come, she went forth according to the law, to the Temple. For forty days the mother of a male child had to remain indoors, could associate with no one, and could touch nothing, because she was supposed to be impure. How is it possible that this lily of purity could be impure, when by God's interposition she still remained a virgin? But the humble virgin preferred to subject herself to the law, to appear impure in order that God's will should be respected. Humility is the great lesson we can learn from this conduct of Mary.

The law obliged the woman, in the rite of purification, to offer a lamb and a pigeon, or if she were poor, she might offer two doves. Mary was poor, and therefore she offered the gift of the poor. She loved poverty and was not ashamed of it. We often consider poverty a disgrace; it makes us feel sad, and yet it makes us more like Mary, and also more like Jesus, who, though the Lord of heaven and earth, descended from heaven, and "being rich He became poor." St. Augustine calls poverty the gold with which heaven is purchased.

The law also provided that the first-born male child was to be consecrated to the Lord. The priest did this. He took the Child in his arms, and held Him up before the holy of holies. Jesus was God for He was the Son of God; the law of the Temple did not bind His holy Mother, but in her humility and her obedience she did not omit the least ceremony. This, my dear young friends, is also the duty of parents to their children; they should offer them from their earliest days to God's service. Instead of that, they often give their children to the devil by the bad example they give them. Poor children, who are thus constrained to drink in wickedness with their mother's milk! But if your parents have failed in their duty, you are obliged to do for yourself. As every

first-fruit had to be offered to God, so you also should dedicate the first days of your life to His service. Have you made this offering to Him? Perhaps you have never thought of this obligation; perhaps you have already made a sacrilegious sacrifice to the devil by committing sin. If this be the case repent of the sin, offer your heart to Jesus, and He will purify it and inflame it with His holy love. Pray to Mary that she may, like a high-priestess, make that offering for you.

In those days there was in Jerusalem a holy man named Simeon, who had had a revelation from the Holy Ghost that he would not see death until he had seen with his own eyes the Redeemer and Messias. Led by divine inspiration he was going to the Temple, and there he met Mary with the Child. An interior voice told him that this was the Child whom he sought, this was the Redeemer. The holy old man seemed to regain his youth and strength. He asked that the Child be placed in his arms, and having kissed and embraced Him, Simeon raised his eyes to heaven, and broke out into this beautiful canticle of love: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace; because my eyes have seen Thy salvation. Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all the people. A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people, Israel." Happy indeed was Simeon to have seen the Child Jesus, and after that great favor he was glad and ready to die. My dear youthful friends, do we, who have Our Lord continually present on our altars, feel the joy of the possession of Christ? Do we feel it as a reality, and not merely as something that we are obliged to believe? With what difficulty are we induced to pay Him a visit at the altar, and when in church how distracted and careless we are! Then, too, that same Jesus comes into our heart in communion, a grace that Simeon did not have. That loving Jesus tells us to come to Him and He will comfort us; but we are very sparing of our visits, and some of us do not go near Him in months or even years. If the priest should distribute money or fruit at the altar

what crowds would come for the gift, but because Christ's body is distributed, few come to receive it.

You surely will not be ungrateful to so much love. Visit Him, adore Him, receive Him into your heart, and then when Jesus has been your comfort in life, He will be your consolation in death. He will come to visit you on your death-bed; He will bless you and be your viaticum on the great journey to eternity. Then indeed will you break forth into those inspired words of old Simeon: Now I will die content and close my eyes in peace, since I have seen the Lord, who has comforted me. Soon these mortal eyes will be closed in death, but the eyes of my soul shall be opened, and I shall behold my beloved Jesus for all eternity.

FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH.

(March 19.)

Gospel. *Matt.* i. 18-21. When Mary, the mother of Jesus, was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her: was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost; and she shall bring forth a Son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.

St. Joseph is called the foster-father of Jesus, the pure spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, titles which we confer on him, and which carry with them great and important privileges. He alone was found worthy to protect the Mother of Christ, the Daughter of the Father, and to his loving reverence was entrusted the Redeemer of the world. From His birth, Jesus depended on him for the necessities of life, and with what watchfulness and tenderness did he not fill his exalted position! To him Mary most pure, and Jesus, spotless Lamb, gave obedience and respect. He was head of that most

holy family on earth, and is now the model for all fathers in all ages. With what virtues was not his soul adorned, since he was found worthy of being clothed with such dignity! Humility, purity, patience, fortitude, longanimity, sweetness of character, and a whole line of virtues must have been found in him in an eminent degree. When God, my dear young friends, raises some one to a great dignity, He does not look at a man's birth, his riches, his honor or his fame. He regards the soul, the virtues which the man practices and the love with which he is filled. It is true that St. Joseph was of noble birth, for he was of the royal house of David; but he was far removed and was poor, and had to gain his livelihood by working as a carpenter. While he was poor in this world's goods he was rich in merit, and dear to God for his sanctity and love; therefore he was richly blessed with the greatest graces.

If you are poor and of little account before the world, yet love Our Lord with great affection, you also will be dear to Him and He will enrich you with His gifts and His graces. Love Our Lord, therefore, with all your heart as did St. Joseph. Though St. Joseph was dear to Our Lord, still He wished Joseph to feel the trials and afflictions of life. But he also had great consolation. The night Our Lord was born in the stable at Bethlehem Joseph's heart was full of heavenly joy. Another great happiness was the visit of the three kings from the East, who offered to the new-born Babe their precious gifts.

When Joseph arrived at Bethlehem with Mary, and found that after wandering from door to door there was no room for them, he felt sorely afflicted, for he felt that he had to look after the comfort of Our Lord. Disappointed and fatigued, he had to take refuge in a stable, in order to provide shelter for the divine Babe. Great also was his sorrow when he heard the aged Simeon prophesy that the Child would be a sign which should be contradicted, and a sword of sorrow should pierce the heart of Mary, the tender Mother. What

dreadful misgivings must he not have felt, when in a dream he received the command of the angel to take the Child and His Mother, and set out for Egypt, an unknown country, where he was to remain until he was again notified; and this in order that he might withdraw Our Lord from the persecution of Herod. I think I can see him, rising quickly from his couch, and telling Mary to prepare for the journey. In Egypt he had great difficulty to find employment, by which he might furnish the necessaries of life to the dear ones whom he had in charge. Nor was his anguish less when he was ordered back to Nazareth, there to open the workshop which had been closed so long. What sorrow must he have felt when for the first time he put the plane and hammer into Our Lord's hands. "O, my Son," Joseph must have said, "am I such a father to you that I cannot provide what is necessary for your sustenance; but that you, too, my God, must work!" But his sorrow must have been much alleviated when he saw with what happiness and cheerfulness Our Lord served him. Hence, while great were his afflictions, great also were his consolations in that life of union with Our Lord. God acts in this way with His saints; He does not always console them, nor does He always afflict them; He distributes these visitations according to the need of the holy soul. He does the same to us, my dear young people. He sends you great consolation to animate you in the practice of virtue, and He will send you hours of consolation, until you cry, "Enough, O Lord, my happiness is too great." He will send you also sufferings, poverty, dishonor and sickness to purify you and make you worthy of Him, and with it all you shall still have peace of mind, the peace of God which is beyond all knowledge. The greatest consolation that Joseph had was at his death, at which Jesus and Mary were present. He saw the hour approach when he was to leave the tender objects of his love; his eyes followed them with affection as they moved about the room ready to minister to him. What holy words must have been spoken to him by Jesus and Mary!

They assisted him in his agony and gave him all possible human relief! The death of St. Joseph was therefore most consoling, for he truly died in the embrace of Our Lord.

Now, my dear young friends, you can set before your minds what reward was granted to him, whose greatest privilege it was to be the foster-father of Our Lord and the protector of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He enjoys in heaven all the glory of which a human being is capable, near the throne of his foster-Son. What demand will ever be denied St. Joseph? His prayers are commands to God. St. Teresa says, "I do not know that I have ever asked anything of St. Joseph that was not granted." Let us all become his devout clients and we also will experience his protection. Our Lord said in a revelation to Margaret of Cortona, "Every day make a tribute of praise to the Blessed Virgin and to my foster-father, St. Joseph."

Yes, my dear young people, if you are really devout in your pious exercises to St. Joseph, he will obtain for you special graces at the hour of your death. He will ask Jesus and Mary to be present, and will suggest to your heart the sweet names of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and you, too, will die a happy death, in the embrace of Our Lord.

THE ANNUNCIATION.

(March 25.)

Gospel. *Luke* i. 26-38. And in the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace: the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord

God shall give unto him the throne of David his father: and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: because no word shall be impossible with God. And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word.

On this day the archangel Gabriel, by God's command, descended from heaven to the little city of Nazareth, to Mary, in order to announce to her the near coming of the Redeemer of the world. The angel entered her little room, and making a reverential bow, said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." No doubt the humble virgin felt great perturbation at this sudden apparition. She was disturbed at the appearance of the angel, who came under the form of a comely youth, and also at the singular announcement. St. John Chrysostom says that Mary manifested great virtues on this occasion, for she heard the salutation with blushes, and instead of breaking out into unbecoming joy, she appeared, in her humility, much concerned at the speech. In truth, what greater praise could the angel have given her than the words "Thou art full of grace"? That fulness of grace supposed that she was free from all sin; a fulness of grace which presupposed the practice and possession of every virtue, by which Mary had become so acceptable to God. That fulness of grace indicated that she was more privileged than the angels and saints. No wonder that she was so full of grace, because the Lord was with her, and she was the privileged woman of her sex. All generations shall call her blessed.

The angel saw the maiden's trouble, and to reassure her, he said, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt

bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David his father: and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." What does the Virgin answer to this announcement? "How shall I become the mother of this great man, when I have consecrated my virginity to God?" The angel answered, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. Nothing is impossible to God; for thy cousin, St. Elizabeth, hath conceived in her old age." Understand, O Mary, that thou shalt not conceive by the power of a man but by the power of the Holy Ghost. The angel waits for thy answer; we too, poor creatures, await your consent, which will be the beginning of our redemption. On thy word depends the consolation of the miserable, the freedom of slaves, the liberation from the sentence of eternal death; in short, the salvation of all the children of Adam. Then the Virgin answered. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." Then was the word made flesh and dwelt among us. The angel joyfully spread his golden wings and hastened to announce to the inhabitants of paradise the happy news, that this glorious Virgin had consented; that already the incarnation had taken place.

O Mary, I fall down at thy feet, and thank thee from the bottom of my heart for that consent. I salute thee as the Mother of my Redeemer, Jesus Christ; not only do I salute thee as the Mother of Jesus, but as my Mother also. St. Francis de Sales exclaimed: "How happy I am! My Mother, the most holy Virgin, loves me as her child!" Have not we, my dear young friends, great reason to rejoice, because we have so good a mother, one so rich, and so loving, who is all powerful with her divine Son? Mary becomes the dispenser of all graces, and some theologians say that God confers no

favors on us except by the hands of the Blessed Virgin. Mary is the vessel of graces, and she gives them out with generosity to all. The benefits we have received, and they are as numerous as the sands on the seashore, all have come to us through Mary. The younger Father Segneri says, "As for me, when I consider the graces which I have received from Mary, let me openly state to the glory of my dear Mother, that I am like one of those churches, where all the walls are covered with votive tablets on which I read, 'For graces received, for graces received.' So also, everywhere in my body and soul I find inscribed, 'by graces received, I am well and strong; by graces received, I have been baptized and preserved in the service of God.'"

You, my dear young friends, have the same story to tell. Health, life, good parents, good education, good companions and teachers—all these blessings come to you from Mary.

Let us then with a loud voice praise the Madonna, honor her as well as we can, think of her often, call her by the endearing name of Mother, love her with a tender affection. St. Stanislaus Kostka was once asked how he loved the Blessed Virgin. "How can I answer this question?" he asked. "She is my Mother, and what more can I say?" If you, too, say with a like affection, she is my Mother and that is why I love her, she on her part will look upon you as her dear child and she will love you with a constant love; she will defend you against the enemies of your salvation, she will cover you with her mantle, she will bestow on you her choicest blessings and will bring you safely to heaven.

Father Alphonsus Salmeron, a devout client of Mary, often repeated on his death-bed, "To paradise, to paradise! blessed be the hour in which I have served Mary; blessed are the sermons which I have heard in thy honor, O Mary; blessed be the work I have done for thee!" If you have loved Mary, your Mother, with a true heart, you will also confidently repeat the same words, "To paradise, to paradise! blessed be the hour in which I have honored Mary!"

GOOD FRIDAY.

GOSPEL. *John* xviii. and xix. *At that time* Jesus went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered. And Judas also, who betrayed him, knew the place: because Jesus had often resorted thither together with his disciples. Judas therefore having received a band of soldiers, and servants from the chief priests and the Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said to them: Whom seek ye? They answered him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith to them: I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon therefore as he had said to them: I am he: they went backward, and fell to the ground. Again therefore he asked them: Whom seek ye? And they said: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he. If therefore you seek me, let these go their way. That the word might be fulfilled, which he had said: Of them whom thou hast given me, I have not lost any one. Then Simon Peter having a sword, drew it: and struck the servant of the high-priest, and cut off his right ear. And the name of the servant was Malchus. Jesus therefore said to Peter: Put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which my father hath given me, shall not I drink it? Then the band and the tribune, and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound him: And they led him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the high-priest of that year. Now Caiphas was he who had given the counsel to the Jews: That it was expedient that one man should die for the people. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. And that disciple was known to the high-priest, and went in with Jesus into the court of the high-priest. But Peter stood at the door without. The other disciple therefore who was known to the high-priest, went out, and spoke to the portress, and brought in Peter. The maid therefore that was portress, saith to Peter: Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith: I am not. Now the servants and ministers stood at a fire of coals, because it was cold, and warmed themselves. And with them was Peter also standing, and warming himself. The high-priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him: I have spoken openly to the world: I have always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither all the Jews resort; and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why asketh thou me? ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them: behold they know what things

I have said. And when he had said these things, one of the servants standing by, gave Jesus a blow, saying: Answerest thou the high-priest so? Jesus answered him: If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil: but if well, why strikest thou me? And Annas sent him bound to Caiphas the high-priest. And Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him: Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it and said: I am not. One of the servants of the high-priest (a kinsman to him whose ear Peter cut off) saith to him: Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Then Peter again denied: and immediately the cock crew. Then they led Jesus from Caiphas to the governor's hall. And it was morning: and they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the pasch. Pilate therefore went out to them, and said: What accusation bring you against this man? They answered and said to him: If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee. Pilate then said to them: Take him you, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said to him: It is not lawful for us to put any man to death. That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled which he said, signifying what death he should die. Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him: Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus answered: Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of me? Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Thy own nation, and the chief-priests have delivered thee up to me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not from hence. Pilate therefore said to him: Art thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest, that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice. Pilate saith to him: What is truth? And when he said this he went out again to the Jews, and said to them: I find no cause in him. But you have a custom that I should release one unto you at the pasch; will you therefore that I release unto you the king of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying: Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber. Then therefore Pilate took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platting a crown of thorns, put it upon his head: and they put on him a purple garment. And they came to him and said: Hail, king of the Jews: and they gave him blows. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith to them: Behold I bring him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in him. (Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns,

and the purple garment.) And he saith to them: Behold the Man. When the chief-priests therefore and the servants had seen him, they cried out, saying: Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith to them: Take him you, and crucify him: for I find no cause in him. The Jews answered him: We have a law, and according to the law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore had heard this saying, he feared the more. And he entered into the hall again: and he said to Jesus: Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him: Speakest thou not to me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee? Jesus answered: Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore he that hath delivered me to thee, hath the greater sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews cried out, saying: If you release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend; for whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.

Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth: and sat down in the judgment-seat, in the place that is called Lithostrotos, and in Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the Parasceve of the Pasch, about the sixth hour, and he saith to the Jews: Behold your king? But they cried out: Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith to them: Shall I crucify your king? The chief-priests answered: We have no king but Cæsar. Then, therefore, he delivered him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him forth. And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew, Golgotha: where they crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side: and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it upon the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. This title therefore, many of the Jews did read, because the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin. Then the chief-priests of the Jews said to Pilate: write not, The king of the Jews: but that he said, I am the king of the Jews. Pilate answered: What I have written, I have written. The soldiers, therefore, when they had crucified him, took his garments (and they made four parts: to every soldier a part), and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another: Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be. That the Scripture might be fulfilled saying: They have parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they have cast lot. And the soldiers indeed did these things. Now there

stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple, standing, whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own. Afterwards Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst. Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar. And they put a sponge full of vinegar, about hyssop, and put it to his mouth. Jesus therefore when he had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated. And bowing his head, he gave up the ghost.

[*Here all kneel, and pause a little, to meditate on the redemption of mankind.*]

Then the Jews (because it was the Parasceve), that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the sabbath-day (for that was a great sabbath-day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers, therefore, came: and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he that saw it hath given testimony: and his testimony is true. And he knoweth that he saith true: that you also may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled. You shall not break a bone of him: And again another Scripture saith: They shall look on him whom they pierced.

[Here the prayer *Munda cor meum* from the Ordinary of the Mass is said.]

And after these things, Joseph of Arimathea (because he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews) besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave leave. He came therefore and took away the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus also came, he who at the first came to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. They took therefore the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now there was in the place where he was crucified a garden: and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man yet had been laid. There, therefore, because of the Parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus; because the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

THE PASSION OF OUR LORD.

To-day I will relate to you not the glories and triumphs, but the ignominies, the sorrows, the sufferings, the death of our divine Redeemer Jesus Christ. It should be told with tears; but alas, we do not feel so sensibly the afflictions of Our Lord, nor have we such lively sympathy for Him that we can shed tears. Still it has happened that holy preachers could not speak of the Passion without weeping. Father Louis of Grenada ascended the pulpit one Good Friday to preach on the Passion. He gave out the subject of his discourse, "The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ," but he broke out into a loud wail, and could not proceed; after a while, calming his feelings, he again began and spoke for a time on the Passion of Our Lord, and told how He suffered for sinners and for His enemies; but he again broke down, and this time he could resume only in accents broken by bitter tears, and, finally, was obliged to leave the pulpit. Such was the effect of his tears on his listeners that they also could not restrain their lamentations. If you listen attentively to my recital, you, too, will feel moved, and will feel contrition for your sins, which in reality were the cause of the Passion and death of Christ.

After Our Lord had fed His disciples on His own flesh, and had given them His own sacred blood to drink, He turned with inexpressible love to them, and said, "My dear children, My disciples, I have but little time left to remain with you. I must now leave you; but love one another and wish one another that good which I have desired for you. Do not weep; I will not leave you orphans, I will send you the Holy Ghost: it is time now to depart; rise." Then leaving the cenacle He crossed the brook Cedron and entered the garden of Gethsemani, at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Here He remained with His three faithful disciples, Peter, James and John. "My dear disciples," He said; "My soul is sorrowful even

unto death; stay you here and watch." Then He prayed to His divine Father that the bitter chalice of His Passion might pass by, but "Thy will be done and not Mine." Prostrate on the ground He began to sweat blood, His clothes were saturated with it, the earth drank it in. Who is at His side to comfort Him? No one; not even His Apostles or disciples. Now we see a band coming, headed by that ungrateful disciple Judas, with orders from the synagogue to apprehend Our Lord. Ah, my dear Lord, Thou art delivered to the Jews by a once beloved disciple. See that sacrilegious man impressing a kiss on the innocent Master! Jesus calls Judas by the name of *friend*, in order that He might perhaps revive sentiments of former intimacy and love. We see, dear Lord, that Thou dost feel for that unfortunate wretch, who is about to lose his soul, and Thou dost not spare the invitation, that he might repent of the step already taken; but Judas is the slave of avarice. There is nothing harder than the heart of an avaricious man. Judas had received the body and blood of his divine Master with a soul stained with sin, and when a man has been guilty of this great crime, there is no excess to which he will not go.

Our Lord asked the band of soldiers and ruffians whom they sought. They said, "Jesus." He said, "I am He;" and at these words all fell backward to the ground. Peter, in his zeal for the defense of the Master, drew his sword, and cut off the ear of the servant of the high-priest. He was reprehended for this hasty action by Our Lord, who healed the servant on the spot. Now they come on with great violence; they bind Jesus, and drag Him to the court, and though He is declared innocent, He is bound to the column of flagellation to be scourged; you hear the dull sounds of the lash, the repeated blows of the heavy scourges, the loud breathing of the soldiers, who are putting all their strength into the punishment. Jesus is now pale and trembling; streams of blood flow from every member of His body; the column is covered with blood; blood is spattered on the faces and clothes of the

executioners; the floor is red with it. The number of stripes run up to the thousands, so that this divine Redeemer has lost all likeness to a man, He is one wound from head to foot. The executioners, in the mean time, continue their scourging; and when one body of men is tired, another takes its place. Jesus suffers all in silence. What barbarity and unheard of cruelty! My sins and yours, my dear friends, thus chastise the innocent body of Jesus, especially those grave sins of impurity. When this cruel scourging was ended, the wicked Jews formed a circle around Our Lord, and in their barbarity invented other tortures; they plaited a crown of sharp thorns and pressed it down on His head, and over His temples, so that the thorns penetrated deep into the flesh. What great suffering did Jesus endure in this! Then they put on Him some old purple rags, placed a reed in His hand, bandaged His eyes, and genuflected before Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews." They spat on Him, struck Him in the face, and then asked, "Who is it that struck Thee?" O, uncreated wisdom! O, infinite majesty! O, omnipotent power of my God! to what lowliness hast Thou been reduced!

In this manner do those youths treat Our Lord who publicly blaspheme God and His holy religion. So horribly disfigured was our divine Redeemer that Pilate thought he might easily induce the bloodthirsty crowd of Jews to have some pity if he brought Him forth and showed Him to them. This he did, and pointing to Our Lord exclaimed, "Behold the man!" You feared He would make Himself king, but see to what a condition He is reduced! He has been treated worse than a slave. Does not this pitiful figure move you to compassion? But they cried out, more like tigers than men, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" Then Pilate said, "Whom will you that I release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ?" And they preferred Barabbas, an infamous thief and murderer.

Our divine Redeemer is unjustly condemned to death, the death of the cross. He embraces it, places it on His shoulders

and begins the dreadful journey to Calvary. Falling several times under the great weight of the cross He is assisted by the Cyrenian, and He continues His sorrowful journey, followed by a crowd of weeping women, to whom Our Lord says: "Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." On the way Our Lord meets His sorrowful Mother. Jesus looks upon her and Mary regards Jesus. What a meeting between Mother and Son! Mary continues the journey with Jesus to the summit of Calvary. When He had arrived there, the executioners attack Our Lord with fury; tear His garments from Him, and strip Him naked. His wounds are torn open anew, and the blood streams from them again. O cruel soldiers, why use such violence on this innocent Lamb, who is so willing to stretch Himself on the cross and to be nailed to it! They seize Him, and force Him down, kneel on His breast, and violently draw His arms, with cords, over the cross-beam; another comes with a hammer and a great iron nail, and this at the first stroke enters into the palm of His hand, opening veins and arteries; they do the same to His other hand and to His feet. O, what were the sufferings which Our Lord endured in His crucifixion! When the Jews had nailed Him to the cross, they sent up shouts of victory; raised the cross to the view of all, and then let it suddenly sink into the hole prepared to make it stand upright. Those executioners, instead of feeling the least sympathy for Jesus, now stand before the cross, blaspheming and reviling Him; but Our Lord raises His eyes to His Father in heaven, and begs pardon for them, for they know not what they do. Then Our Lord hears the prayer of the penitent thief, and turning to him a countenance full of love, He promises that this day he shall be with Him in paradise. My dear young friends who have sinned, Jesus has His ears open ready to hear you, His arms are extended to receive you; He has welcomed the thief, He will also receive you with open arms, provided you ask pardon for your sins.

Then Jesus turns His face to His beloved Mother and to

His disciple John, and says, "Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy Mother." In doing this He commended us all as His children to Mary our Mother. Thus hanging on the cross, all covered with wounds, the last drop of His blood draining from His body, thirsty with exhaustion and from love of our souls, Jesus cries out, "I thirst." And they give Him wine mixed with gall. Yes, my dear Lord, we understand; you call for our souls; we give them to you; you wish to call us to our salvation, and we desire it also.

All at once the sun is darkened, the whole earth is clothed in darkness, and trembles with a great earthquake. Jesus now wishes to die and cries out with a loud voice, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit. It is consummated," and inclining His head, He gives up the ghost.

Jesus is dead, that dear Jesus, who was born for us in the poor stable at Bethlehem. He is dead, who loved us so much, who labored so hard to instruct us; He who worked so many miracles; who travelled up and down through the land of the Jews, doing good everywhere. The most beautiful, the dearest, the most amiable Son of man has died on the cross for us. O, barbarous Jews, what have you done? You have committed murder on the Son of God, the Author of life! But, no, not the Jews only—we, also, blind sinners, have done this to the Son of God. Isaias says, "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins." All these cruelties that were inflicted on Him were the work of our hands.

St. Teresa wrote her general confession on a sheet of paper, and then taking the crucifix in her hand and casting a sorrowful look at it, said: "What have I done?" She looked at the wounds in His hands and feet and then at the paper, "What have I done?" A look at the head crowned with thorns, at the side opened with a lance, "Ah! what have I done?" She then fell on the floor in a swoon, and lay as one dead. Her sisters rushed in and administered restoratives, and coming to she again cried out: "What have I done?" Should not this be our sorrow also? What have we

done? How often have we forced the crown of thorns on that sacred head by our bad thoughts? How often have we driven great nails into the hands and feet of the Lord by our sins? How often have we given Our Lord vinegar and gall to drink, by our scandalous language? How often have we pierced the side of Our Lord, by corrupting souls? O, Lord Jesus, have mercy on us, forgive us the sins we have committed against Thee; never again will we renew Thy Passion and death; we shall constantly bewail our faults; we shall live for Thy glory, and we shall always love Thee with all our hearts.

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

GOSPEL. *Mark* xvi. 14-20. *At that time as the eleven* were at the table, Jesus appeared to them, and upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart: because they did not believe them who had seen him after he was risen again. And he said to them: Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues: they shall take up serpents: and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God. But they going forth preached everywhere, the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed.

AFTER Our Lord had consoled the Apostles by appearing to them at different times, and by wishing them peace, He declared at last that He was about to leave this world and ascend to heaven "to prepare a place for them."

On this day, for the last time, He came to visit the Apostles. He promised to send them the divine Spirit, the Spirit of strength and wisdom. He said that the time had arrived for Him to go from them to remain in the enjoyment of His

peace. He raised His hands, blessed them, and took leave of them all, as well as of His dear Mother. He then conducted them to the Mount of Olives. There they listened to His words, with their eyes fixed upon Him, when suddenly He was raised above them; higher and higher still He was borne, until a light cloud withdrew Him from their sight. While they were beholding Him going up to heaven, suddenly two angels stood by them, who said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven?" This same Jesus whom you have just seen ascending into heaven will return again at the end of the world to judge mankind. He will then appear in the same form in which you have just seen Him. You ought then, my dear young friends, joyfully do all that He has commanded you before He left you, that you may be well received by Him on His return. The disciples fell to the ground and adored their Lord and Master, and then returned to Jerusalem; where they retired to a quiet place, and remained in prayer until the coming of the Holy Ghost.

My dear young people, who can imagine the great triumph with which the King of glory was received on His entrance into heaven. The whole court of heaven was there, ready to meet its Master and Creator. All came forward to make their submission to the great Conqueror of the world and the devil, who has returned in triumph. These good souls must have been in an ecstasy of joy when they saw the great Hero; they looked with wonder on those wounds, which shone like stars. As He entered heaven they joined Him singing hymns and canticles to the great glory of God; then they conducted Him to His throne in heaven, where He sits at the right hand of His Father.

Our Lord, my dear young friends, left this world and ascended into heaven, to prepare a place for us; we had lost heaven, but He regained it for us. He again opened heaven to us, that pleasant, happy place, which will be our home for all eternity. As long as we live on this earth, we shall have to suffer many evils, sickness, and, finally, death, but

in heaven we shall have everything; riches, happiness, enjoyment; we shall be inebriated with torrents of delight. The angels will be our companions, the saints will be there, and Mary and Jesus, too. We shall enjoy the happiness that God gives; we shall see God's omnipotence, with which He created heaven and earth; we shall see His wisdom and providence, by which all created things are governed; we shall see all the perfections and attributes of God clearly. We shall then see the Son of God in the Godhead, and Jesus in His divine person. We shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. We shall see God in the splendor of His glory on a throne of majesty; the centre and source of all the joy and brightness of heaven. If one little drop of that heavenly joy should fall from heaven into hell, it would sweeten the dreadful pains that are felt there.

But, my dear young friends, remember that if you wish to attain the possession of this happiness and to reign with Jesus, you must not look for your heaven here on this earth; those who enjoy this world will hardly enjoy heaven. Many wish to give full sway to their passions here, and then expect to have the reward of heaven also. But they are foolish, for if they indulge their passions here in this world, they defile their souls, and cannot enter heaven. If you want to get to heaven, keep the law of God, keep the commandments of the Church, observe the laws of the state, and you will have a right to its joys.

Not only should we observe the commandments of God, but we must also join to it the imitation of Jesus Christ if we wish to possess the place which He has prepared for us in heaven. My dear children, Jesus Christ is the model that is set before us and we must imitate Him just as the artist does who has a model before him; he marks the outlines, and then faithfully follows every lineament, every particular feature with the most scrupulous exactness. Have you so far endeavored to model your lives on that of Jesus Christ? "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," so that those who see

you will say, "this is a faithful imitator of the divine Master." It is easy to recognize the original and the faithful copy.

Jesus, my dear young people, is the lily of the valley, the immaculate Lamb. Here is a very important virtue. Do you possess that scrupulous purity of thought and action which renders man like the angels? Jesus was obedient, obedient even unto death. What are the inclinations which most young people follow? They are disobedient and rebellious, independent and loving liberty; they are constantly looking for pleasure, so that life loses the necessary seriousness which belongs to it. What a difference between their life and that of Christ! Your whole effort, my dear children, should be to imitate Jesus in the purity of His life, in His obedience to the divine will, and His respect for authority. Lead a mortified life, joyfully accepting all the trials you may meet with here on this earth, and then shall come true as St. Paul says, "As you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation."

A young man once came to St. Jerome and said he desired to abandon the world, to follow Jesus and to imitate Him. He was rich. St. Jerome voluntarily accepted him among his disciples, but he took him aside and gave him a little instruction. First he said, "Son, our life is a very hard one, as you see; we have no shoes, our clothes are coarse, we have to bear the cold and the heat in our houses; to endure abuses and hard words from people and violent temptations from the devil. I know not whether you can endure all this; you seem to have been brought up tenderly and in luxury." The young man answered, "Am I more delicate than Jesus was when He walked about without shoes, suffered hunger and thirst, cold and heat, many persecutions and at last death? He has promised to help me: had I twenty bodies I would sacrifice them all for His love."

O, my dear young people, if you will reflect seriously but for a moment, you will see that the imitation of Jesus Christ is a necessity. "I have given you an example that as I have

done to you, so you do also." Jesus desires you all to be in paradise. Do you not wish to go there? Yes, certainly; everybody expects to go to heaven; it is the greatest insult even to intimate to your friend that there is a danger of his going to hell.

Do, then, as the Apostles did. When they saw Our Lord ascend and taken away from them their hearts followed Him because they had no interest except in the glory of Jesus and the spread of His kingdom on earth. They desired trials, torments, persecutions, even violent deaths in order to be the sooner with Christ. They disliked the world and all its vanities. Let us not put our love on the things of this earth; let us look up to heaven, where our home is. Let us suffer, let us labor hard, let us employ all our time in this life, and so deserve a heavenly reward.

FEAST OF ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA.

(JUNE 21.)

GOSPEL. *Matt.* xxii. 29-40. *At that time, Jesus answering said to the Sadducees:* You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married: but shall be as the angels of God in heaven. And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken by God saying to you: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And the multitudes hearing it were in admiration at his doctrine. But the Pharisees hearing that he had silenced the Sadducees, came together. And one of them, a doctor of the law, asked him, tempting him: Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.

CARDINAL BARONIUS, a holy and learned man, visiting the tomb of St. Aloysius shortly after the saint's death cried,

"This is a saint! this is a saint!" He was firmly persuaded that in consideration of his beautiful life Aloysius would be canonized, and the Cardinal could not refrain from publicly calling him a saint.

Mary Magdalen of Pazzi saw in one of her ecstasies the beatitude and glory of our saint in heaven, and cried out, "How great is the glory of Aloysius, the son of Ignatius! I should never have believed that there was so much glory in store for a saint, had I not seen it. I had not thought it possible that there could be so much glory in heaven. I tell you, Aloysius is a great saint, and I would like to publish it to the whole world."

I rejoice, my dear young people, that I can speak to you of so great a saint as St. Aloysius Gonzaga, to whom you are already so devoted, and whose virtues you study to imitate in your lives. Permit me to prove to you that though he was an angel by his innocence, he still practiced the most severe penances.

From his earliest youth St. Aloysius led a most exact and singularly innocent life. You see him when he can hardly walk going off by himself to some solitary place to pray, kneeling down before God with his little hands joined. The first words which he spoke were Jesus and Mary. Early in life he cared not for the sports that boys delight in, but instead he loved prayer and silence; his delight was in prayer and in the crucified Lord. Oh, that I could describe to you how devoutly he prayed in his room before the crucifix! He was like a young Samuel who was constantly in the temple of God. Aloysius often left his companions and went to church, where he was found in adoration of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament with such exterior devotion that people wondered that one so young could have so much piety. Older people became ashamed that they were less devout and they could not take their eyes from him, so charmed were they with his modesty and devotion.

When Aloysius was nine years old he made a pilgrimage to

the shrine of the Blessed Virgin of the Annunciation at Florence, a famous pilgrimage of that day, and there made a vow of chastity. The holy virtue of purity, with the assistance of the Blessed Virgin, he preserved with most scrupulous care. You might say that this was the great act of his life, for so great was his purity that he was called by all an angel. So great was it that not only did he not in his whole life stain this robe of innocence, but he never even had a temptation against this great virtue, not even in thought.

Living in the midst of the splendors of the court he cared nothing for them. He had his mind always fixed on God, and was always impressed with God's presence. He lived in the court in quietness, and when he could be spared from his duties he remained in his room occupied in prayer. So great was his union with God, that five or six times he was found in ecstasy in his meditation. He had such an abhorrence for the things of this world and its vanities, that ordinarily he dressed in common clothes. When he was asked why he did not use one of his magnificent uniforms, he answered that it was part of the pomp of the world, which he had long since renounced at his baptism. "Life," said he, "is short, and is given to me only to gain heaven. What good can come from the enjoyment of the frivolities and pleasures of the court, when they will have to end so shortly? I renounce all. I do not desire riches or pleasures. I wish to rejoice in God alone, in a sweet retirement from the world."

At this time he made up his mind to renounce the world altogether, and join the sons of Ignatius; but in the execution of this resolution he met with much opposition from his father, who did not relish the loss of so good a son. But Aloysius begged and pleaded and wept, and at last he obtained his father's consent. He entered the house of the novitiate and, with joy expressed on his countenance, cried out, "Oh, holy place! object of all my desires! This is my habitation for life!" If Aloysius understood so well how to preserve his innocence in the midst of the corruption of the

court and the world, you, too, should be faithful to your religion and from day to day make progress in the work of the sanctification of your souls.

Aloysius kept such a rigid and penitential life that one cannot but wonder that a youth so high born, so delicate, could endure it. At eleven years he practiced such fasts as would hardly be credited. Sometimes an egg sufficed him for the single meal of a day. On Friday he contented himself with a little bread and water. His meals, in fact, never exceeded an ounce of food, at an age when most boys, on account of their appetites, cannot get enough to eat. No hermit ever lived a more mortified life than St. Aloysius. We wonder at the continuous fasts of a Paul the Hermit, or an Anthony, but they were no greater than the fasts of Aloysius at a tender age, though he was brought up surrounded by luxury.

He was not content with fasts; three times a week he took the discipline, and scourged himself so unmercifully that blood flowed. When the discipline was not at hand he beat himself with a piece of rope, or with an iron chain. He slept but little, and at the sound of the bell he rose joyfully, unmindful of the cold floor, and knelt there for hours in prayer. The cold affected him, and he frequently trembled from head to foot and sometimes even became so weak that he fell prostrate to the ground, where he lay continuing his prayer. His linen was given to his mother every week, stained with blood, and when she remonstrated with him, he merely said, "Let me, mother, expiate my many sins by so small a mortification." Ah, Aloysius, what sins have you to expiate —you who led such an angelic life!

Aloysius was very humble; when he became a cleric he used to say: "What good can a religious find in me?" In his sickness, which was prolonged, he used to ask not for the most pleasant medicines, but the bitter ones, and these he took slowly that the bitterness might be more felt. In this sickness he had the seven penitential psalms read to him. He was often found kneeling in his bed, praying, and he some-

times dragged himself to the other end of the room to kiss a crucifix that hung against the wall. He had received the viaticum in his last sickness, and the hour of his death was at hand, when he turned to his Superior, who stood near the bed. "Father," said he, "I wish to ask a favor and hope it will not be denied, for it is the last one I shall make. I want you to allow me to take the discipline once more." Oh, generous-hearted, noble Aloysius! You wish to take the discipline and you are not able to stand on your feet! "I know, my dear friends, that I am not able to do it myself, but I ask that a substitute may do it for me. Dear Father, depute some one to beat me severely from head to foot, and then I shall not die with the sin on my conscience that I did not do penance during my lifetime." Of course this request was not granted. Then he asked to be laid on the bare floor.

Why did this young saint wish to be treated so cruelly? He was afraid of the judgment of God for his sins, thinking, perhaps, that for want of sorrow, penance or good resolutions he had not been forgiven.

Now what were the great sins which Aloysius bewailed so much, and had to confess. One day, it is said, he stole some powder to fire off a gun; another time he used a bad expression that he had learned from the soldiers. When he threw himself at the feet of his confessor to tell these sins, he was affected to tears, and was half dead with fright at the thought of them. These were the sins for which he continued to do penance! Oh, what miserable, poor beings are we, who have so many and great crimes to answer for, and to do penance for, when Aloysius did so much to satisfy God for these smaller sins!

Notwithstanding all his fear Aloysius possessed his soul in peace, trusting in the mercy of God. He knew he had done little to glorify God, still he did not despair.

When he heard that he was about to die he rejoiced, and asked his brothers to sing the *Te Deum* for him, saying: "Oh,

you do not know what welcome news I have heard! In a week I am to die; let us thank God for so great a grace." He often repeated, "I shall go with joy." Once when the provincial of the order asked him how he was, he answered, "I am going with joy, and to heaven, if my sins are not an obstacle." When the hour of death was close at hand he said, "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." When those around him saw that he spoke no more, and hardly gave any sign of consciousness, they put a lighted candle into his hand, and he held it as well as he could. They repeated the holy name of Jesus and his lips could be seen to move as if to pronounce that name. Shortly after he died quietly, as if falling asleep, and thus this holy youth gave up the spirit in the twenty-third year of his age.

Is not such a death beautiful, my dear friends? To die in the Lord is a great consolation, for it takes away all the bitterness of death. Strive to die as St. Aloysius did, by living the life he led. St. Aloysius, pray to God for us that we may imitate your beautiful life! Alas, we have not imitated you in your innocence. Let us, however, do some penance that we may at least deserve the mercy of God by our tears. Dear saint, let us understand abomination of sin that hereafter we may live in such a manner as to please God, and deserve heaven.

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(JUNE 24.)

GOSPEL. *Luke* i. 57-68. Now Elizabeth's full time of being delivered was come, and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and kinsfolks heard that the Lord had showed his great mercy towards her, and they congratulated with her. And it came to pass that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they called him by his father's name, Zachary. And his mother answering, said: Not so, but he shall be called John. And they said to her: There

is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called: And demanding a writing-table, he wrote, saying: John is his name. And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came upon all their neighbors: and all these things were noised abroad over all the hill-country of Judea. And all they that had heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: What an one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him. And Zachary his father was filled with the Holy Ghost; and he prophesied, saying: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people.

St. John the Baptist, the precursor of Our Lord, was a great saint. Such singular things happened at his birth that people said, "What think you is to become of this child?" The angel said he would be great before God, and Our Lord distinctly said that there was no one born of woman greater than he. In former times on the feast of St. John the Baptist, it is said the priest used to say three Masses just as at Christmas to distinguish this feast from others. Let us to-day review the life and death of this holy man.

The birth of St. John was singular; his father Zachary was old, and no longer expected a son, but the angel assured him that God wished to give him one who was to be great before God. This promise appeared impossible to Zachary, and for his want of faith Our Lord struck him with dumbness, which lasted until the day of the circumcision of St. John, when the child was to receive a name. Zachary took up a slate and wrote on it, "John is his name," and then he broke forth into that noble canticle, "Blessed be the God of Israel."

St. John, though he was a saint, and full of the Holy Ghost, resolved in his early age to go to the desert and spend his time there; he begged his parents to allow him to go away from the world. They consented and he went into a desert country beyond the Jordan. It must have been a great sor-

row to them to lose their son at such an early age, but they were assured that it was the will of God, and they were perfectly resigned. Not many people are so struck with the importance of a good life that they run into the desert to live, in order to be out of danger of the world.

St. John in the desert is a true picture of a penitential life; in fact his life was a long martyrdom, and he persevered in it until he was called forth to preach, and to prepare the way of the Lord. His food was locusts and wild honey, he slept on the bare earth, he did not, as St. Jerome says, even build for himself a hut to protect him from the severity of the weather. His occupation during these many years of solitude was uninterrupted prayer, and communion with God. Reflect a moment, my dear young people. St. John the Baptist, a saint you might say by birth, wished to do such severe penance, and we, who have committed terrible sins, are afraid of the least penance and mortification. If we do not wish to do penance, at least let us abstain from sin. From their very youth many commit great crimes, and instead of doing penance they multiply the number of their iniquities. How wicked are such young people, and how blind! For thirty years John was in the desert, and then he followed the call from God, to come forth and preach that penance which he had so long practiced. Along the banks of the Jordan he went, crying, "Do penance, bring forth good fruit of penance," for the kingdom of God is coming, and He who is to come is to point it out to you. The people were struck by these words, and willingly listened to him; many did what he asked, for they thought he was some great prophet, Eliseus or Elias, who had come to life again. His preaching was strong and decisive; he reproved people for their sins; even Herod was told it was wrong for him to live in open sin. Herod had him apprehended and thrown into prison for offending his majesty, and on a great feast his head was cut off, to satisfy the spiteful woman who had been the object of Herod's impurity.

St. John had a number of disciples who followed him as a master or teacher. When he was apprehended, he consoled them, and directed them to join Our Lord. From his prison he sent a committee to Jesus with the question, "Art Thou He who art to come, or look we for another?" Herod kept St. John several months in prison; here let me tell you the story of his death. Herod gave a feast to the impious Herodias, and invited many neighboring princes and men in high authority. The daughter of Herodias came in and danced before the guests; they were all so pleased that Herod promised he would give her anything she asked, even half his kingdom. When the dance was over she went to her mother to ask what her request should be. Her mother said, "Go thou, and ask for the head of John the Baptist, and bring it to me at once. I want to get that man out of the way, and now is the time when I can do it; perhaps never again will such an opportunity present itself." Though Herod saw now the wickedness and thoughtlessness of his oath and promise, still he gave orders that St. John should be beheaded and his head presented to the impious Herodias on a dish. The saint received the news of his death with joy; he needed very little time to prepare for the other world; he saw that the end of his usefulness had come, and he was satisfied to go to God. He was so holy that it was a consolation for him to die. When the guests saw the head, they were disgusted at this exhibition of cruelty on the part of Herod's family who had invited them to the feast. What consternation must have come over those half-drunken men and women! In this way, too, in horror and fright we also may end our life of sin and our sinful festivals, and eternally bewail our wickedness. Be steadfast in good, and so firm in the practice of your duties that you would allow yourself to be beheaded rather than to yield. You may gain this fidelity by praying to St. John, as many graces and favors have been obtained through his intercession, especially on his feast-day.

FEAST OF ST. PETER.

(JUNE 29.)

GOSPEL. *Matt.* xvi. 13-19. *At that time* Jesus came into the district of Cesarea Philippi, and he asked his disciples, saying: Whom do men say that the Son of man is? But they said: Some, John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others, Jeremias; or one of the prophets. Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.

How beautiful is our holy religion! Not only does she propose to our imitation the life of Our Lord, but she shows us also poor weak human beings, that have been sanctified by God's grace and mercy, and have become saints in heaven. Such were the Apostles, and so many other saints, who, from very imperfect beings became holy men and women.

Let us therefore speak of the great Apostle, St. Peter, whose feast, with that of St. Paul, we celebrate to-day. We shall see in this discourse how he was elevated to so high a dignity, through the lively faith and intense love he had for Jesus Christ.

The faith of St. Peter was of the liveliest character: the first time he saw Our Lord he believed in Him, became His disciple and abandoned all to follow Him. Once from his boat he saw Our Lord walking toward him on the water, and so great was his faith in His power, that he believed it would be possible to walk on the water also, if Our Lord so ordered.

The first time Our Lord taught the great mystery of the Blessed Eucharist, promising that He would give His flesh

to eat and His blood to drink, many of His hearers and disciples left Him, so much were they shocked. Our Lord asked Peter whether he, too, would go away: to which he answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." No, Lord, never will I leave Thee, let all fly from Thee, and abandon Thee, but I will always be happy in Thy company, even though I should have to give my life for this fidelity.

But who does not remember St. Peter's betrayal of Our Lord at the court of Pilate, when a servant girl remembered to have seen Peter, and said that he was one of the companions of the Nazarene; he assured the bystanders that he knew not the man, and confirmed his assertion by oaths and curses. But Jesus cast a glance of commiseration on the guilty Peter, who then remembered his Lord's words: "Before the cock crows, thou wilt deny Me thrice," and going out, he wept bitterly. Another sign of the faith of St. Peter is shown from the following incident: Once Our Lord asked His disciples who they thought He was; they mentioned different persons, Elias, or one of the prophets. But Peter at once answered, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." That is, Thou art the Messias promised to the Jews, the Desired of all nations, the King of Israel, the King of kings, the Lord of lords whom all must obey. This was a wonderful confession and the Lord approved of it. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father, who is in heaven. And I say to thee thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven."

If Peter's faith was great, immense also was his reward: In consideration of that great faith, he was constituted the head of the Church, the master of all; that by the special

gift vouchsafed to him, the Church might be preserved infallible. As a reward of his faith you see him work the most wonderful miracles, healing the sick even by the shadow of his body; the lame walked, the devils fled from those that were possessed, and he raised the dead to life. We read in the Acts of the Apostles of a poor man whose lower limbs were paralyzed so that he was not able to walk. When this poor man saw Peter passing, he asked for alms, but Peter said, "Silver and gold, I have none, but what I have I give thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk." Another miracle wrought by St. Peter is the following: A noble young man, a relation of the king, died; his parents and relatives had recourse to Peter, who after a short prayer, turned to the body and said, "Young man, I say to thee, arise." Jesus gave him life and health, and at once he rose. Peter took him by the hand and gave him to his parents. My dear young friends, do you wish to do great things for God and for humanity, and do you wish to have the help of God in all your undertakings? Imitate the faith of Peter; make with Peter that beautiful confession to Our Lord, by calling Him the Son of God. When you receive Jesus in holy communion, when you visit the church where Jesus is on the altar, call Him Jesus, the Son of the living God, because it shows your faith and your love for Him.

The love of Peter for Our Lord was also very great. You can see this from the following incident, related in the Gospel: One day after Peter's triple betrayal, Our Lord suddenly came upon him and said, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" and Peter answered, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." He saith to him, "Feed My lambs." Then Our Lord asked him again, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" Peter gave the same answer, and Jesus said, "Feed My sheep." Then for the third time Our Saviour asked, "Lovest thou Me?" and Peter was grieved, for it looked as if Our Lord doubted his fidelity, firmness, and love. So in despair he said to Our Lord: "Lord, Thou knowest all

things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Then Jesus said, "Feed My lambs." These glorious offices were intrusted to Peter on account of that faithful and enthusiastic love he showed for Christ. My dear young people, if Our Lord were to address you in these words, "Dost thou love Me?" what could you answer? Could you with St. Peter say, "Thou knowest, Lord, that I love Thee." Would you not have to answer, "I love Thee but little, O Lord; somehow I must confess that I love pleasures, plays, pastimes and feasts more." Others will have to say, "No, Lord; I love Thee not. I hate Thee. Go away from me; my love is for the devil and sin." You thereby confess yourself an enemy of Christ, and dreadful will be your fate in the future. Let us, my dear friends, make a profession of love to Our Lord, saying, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee; we have been friends for many years, Thou knowest that I have not deserted Thee."

St. Peter gave practical proofs of his love for Jesus by the gigantic works which he undertook; the preaching of the Gospel and supervising the workings of the infant Church. He did not fear to appear now in the very midst of those who had crucified Our Lord. He is not afraid now of Pilate's servants, and he tells the Jews openly, "You denied the holy One, and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, but the Author of life you killed." Thus he remained faithful to the cause of Our Lord, in all the trials that came upon him. When put in prison, when cruelly treated and persecuted, when the priests had him scourged, he did not cease to preach constantly the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When they forbade him to do it, he said, "Judge for yourselves whether we should not obey God rather than men." He had to suffer much among those many and bitter enemies; but the love of Jesus made him superior to all suffering; no persecution could tire him; he possessed great peace of soul, even though he was in chains. At length the day arrives when he is to give the last and greatest proof of

his love. He rejoiced when judgment was passed on him, and he was to be crucified.

"Ah," he said, "I am not worthy to die as my Master did; crucify me with my head down, and thus I will suffer a little more for Him." His prayer was granted. This is the reason that in pictures we see St. Peter crucified with his head downwards. St. Peter praised God on the cross and preached for the short while he had to suffer, and then he gave up his soul to the Lord, who brought him with glory to the realms of paradise.

One thing more I wish to recommend strongly to you, my dear young friends, and that is the great faith and love St. Peter had for Our Lord. On this, his glorious day of martyrdom, pray for the whole Catholic world; pray that he may protect and intercede for you at the throne of the omnipotent God, pray that you may be able to resist the insinuations of modern unbelief; pray that he may obtain for you a true sorrow for your sins, and the strength of soul not to commit them again; pray that he may obtain for you the true love of Jesus, that having loved Him faithfully on earth, you may have the happiness to continue that love for all eternity in heaven.

FEAST OF ST. LAWRENCE THE MARTYR.

(August 10.)

Gospel. *John* xii. 24-26. *At that time* Jesus said to his disciples: Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground, die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal. If any man minister to me, let him follow me: and where I am, there also shall my minister be If any man minister to me, him will my Father honor.

In the first ages of the Church, the Fathers and the faithful gave great honor to St. Lawrence the Martyr. St. Augus-

tine, the great Doctor, speaks in these words of him: "The glory of the martyrdom of St. Lawrence is so great, that he has illumined the whole world with that bright light with which he found himself filled, and with the example of which he encouraged all the faithful of his day." Christians of all ages have always shown great devotion for him. Many cities have built temples in his honor. In order to excite devotion for that great saint, let me briefly relate the story of his martyrdom.

St. Lawrence was born in Rome. Though poor in the world's goods, he was rich in the graces of heaven, which made him great in the eyes of God, who looks on the riches of virtue possessed by the soul. His rare qualities soon brought him to the notice of St. Sixtus the Pope, who received him among his clerics, ordained him a deacon, and gave him the ministration of such duties as were likely to make him still more perfect. Under the guidance of a Pontiff so holy and so full of the Holy Ghost, he made such progress that in a little time he became a model of sanctity, and was worthy, though very young, to be promoted to the order of deacon; in fact, he became the head of the seven deacons who had the administration of the temporal affairs of the Church in Rome.

At that time the emperor Valerian carried on a fierce persecution against the Christians which was directed mainly against the bishops, priests and deacons. Pope Sixtus was one of the first to be apprehended, with a number of clerics who were celebrating the divine rites in the cemetery of Callixtus. When Sixtus was carried away by the soldiers Lawrence followed with tears in his eyes and said: "Where are you going, Father, without your son; where are going, O holy priest, without your deacon? What have I done to displease you that you leave me thus? Give me an opportunity to prove myself worthy of the great duty imposed on me of distributing the body of the Lord Jesus Christ." Were these not noble words, worthy of a saint? Struck by Law-

rence's fidelity St. Sixtus said: "I do not doubt thee, my son. But for thee a greater combat for the faith of Christ is in reserve. I, an old man, will have but a short combat, but you being younger and stronger will obtain a greater triumph over the tyrant. Do not take it so much to heart that I go first; in three days you shall follow me. In the meantime give all thou hast to the poor, for they, too, are in danger of falling into the hands of the tyrant."

Lawrence was rejoiced when he heard that in three days he would be led to martyrdom, and began to think at once what disposition he should make of his worldly goods. He had already executed in part the command of the holy Pope, when he met him, being led between two deacons to his death. Approaching him Lawrence said: "Father, I have done what you commanded; I have given to the poor the treasures of the Church." The guards now apprehended him, and informed Decius Cæsar that Lawrence possessed the treasures of the Church. Decius had him brought before him, and asked him where he had hidden the treasures. Lawrence requested three days to bring the treasures together and promised that he would show them to him. Lawrence got the respite, and in the meantime he gave away all that was still in his hands. On the day appointed, all the poor, the maimed, the blind, and slaves assembled at the tribunal of Decius and St. Lawrence with them. Then he said to the tyrant: "I have gathered into the courtyard all the vessels of gold and silver." The prefect went down to look at the heaps of valuables which he imagined would be there, but his astonishment was indescribable and his anger fierce when he saw assembled crowds of the poorest people in Rome. St. Lawrence asked: "Why are you so angry at not seeing gold and silver which you love so much? Those metals are but dross in comparison to the treasures which I have brought together; here are the treasures of the Church." This is a great lesson to proud, rich people who think so much of their wealth, but despise the poor of God. My dear young friends,

though you are in poverty, provided you are faithful to Our Lord, provided you never stain your hearts with sin, you shall always be vases of gold and silver, which shall shine brightly in the light of paradise.

As I said, the tyrant when he saw that he had, as he supposed, been trifled with, became terribly angry, and determined to make the youth lose his faith. He thereupon ordered him to abandon his religion, threatening that if he did not do as ordered he would be delivered over to the torturers, who would torment him through the whole night. But Lawrence replied that it would be a blessed night, full of joy and happiness to him; that the night would lose all its darkness. At this answer the tyrant became more embittered against his victim; he had him scourged with sharp thongs till the flesh was torn from his sides; he was suspended over a slow fire, and his body was burned with red-hot plates; but Lawrence thanked Our Lord for these sufferings, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, true God and Son of God, have mercy on me, Thy servant. I have not given up my faith in Thee; being questioned, I confessed Thee before all." At last even the tyrant tired of these cruelties, and wished them to be brought to an end, still not suddenly. Fire was made under a grate and Lawrence was laid upon it to be slowly roasted to death. St. Lawrence bore these tortures with a great joy, because, as St. Augustine says, he had been strengthened by the body and blood of Christ; his love was greater than the flames. He turned to Decius and said: "Miserable man, these burning coals are a comfort to me, but to thee they shall be an intolerable fire for all eternity." By this time the flames had roasted one side; he turned to the tyrant and said: "You see I am already roasted on one side; now turn me over that I may be roasted on both sides, and you may satisfy your hunger with my flesh, since you cannot satisfy yourself with the treasures of the Church, which have already been carried to heaven by the hands of the poor."

In this way the glorious St. Lawrence triumphed over the cruel tyrant, and made him ashamed of his cruelties. The martyr's end was now at hand; raising his eyes to heaven, he said: "I thank Thee, Lord God, because Thou hast deigned to permit me, by these torments, to merit heaven." Then he prayed for Rome and tranquilly rendered up his spirit to God.

You have seen, my dear young people, the invincible fortitude St. Lawrence exhibited in enduring the greatest torments. He would rather suffer anything than renounce his faith. You, my dear young friends, can gain heaven by a great deal less than that; you can gain heaven by doing some little good, by saying a few pious and short prayers in the morning and at night, by going to Mass on Sundays and frequenting the sacraments. Little is required of us with which to merit heaven; would that we did that little perseveringly. Learn from St. Lawrence and beg him fervently each day to obtain for you a portion of his firmness in the service of God and a great desire of paradise; and determine that rather than renounce your heavenly birthright, you, at least in intention, will sacrifice everything.

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

(August 15.)

Gospel. *Luke* x. 38-42. *At that time:* Jesus entered into a certain town; and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who, sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word. But Martha was busy about much serving: who stood and said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her, therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering, said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Who is she that comes from the dreary desert of this world radiant with celestial joy? Who is she that, beautiful

as the moon, glorious as the sun, comes from the earth in a path of light, surrounded by bright spirits? It is Mary, that beloved creature into whom God has infused His choicest graces and fitted with the most beautiful gifts. It is Mary who enters paradise this day, who comes to take possession of the eternal kingdom of joy, to be crowned by the eternal Father, and to be proclaimed Queen of heaven and earth. Angels of heaven, open the gates of paradise, for the Queen of eternal bliss is at hand, and is about to enter! Myriads of heavenly spirits have formed into a procession, and, respectfully inclined before her, they sing a joyous song, and accompany her to the throne of her divine Son, who also comes forward to meet and welcome her. "Come, dear Mother," He says, "enjoy the reward of thy pious and holy life; I will crown thee Queen of heaven: thou shalt be the dispenser of My graces, into thy hands I intrust the treasures of paradise; thou shalt distribute them to men." The crown is then placed on her head, and the angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins acknowledge her as their Queen and salute her. What a glorious triumph that was! to what height of glory was she placed, when, crowned by her divine Son, Mary was raised in glory and in power above all the choirs of angels and saints! There is no one in heaven greater than Mary, except her divine Son.

My dear young friends, we must endeavor to feel this joy in our hearts on this day, when Mary was placed above all creatures in heaven. We rejoice also because she is our Mother, and we, her sons and daughters, are going to be enriched with the favors and blessings which she dispenses. We must, however, be affectionate children, for it is only to such that she will give her benefits. Mary is the gate of heaven, she has the keeping of the door. "Open to us, Mary," prayed St. Ambrose, "open to us the gates of heaven." "Who are those who will be saved?" exclaims St. Dionysius the Carthusian, "who will go to heaven?" Those certainly for whom this glorious Queen exerts her efforts. "The true

lovers of this holy Queen will necessarily be saved," says St. Antonius. Mary assists and defends her good children in death, and brings them to heaven. St. Bernard says: "By thy mercy is heaven filled with blessed souls." But, you will ask, what are we to do to be devout to the Blessed Virgin? What are we to do? You must imitate her, and make every effort to practice her many virtues, her humility, her purity, her charity, her detachment from the earth and her fervent desire of heaven. The words which St. Paul said of Our Lord may also, to some extent, be applied to her; if you suffer with Mary, you shall also be glorified with her; if you walk in her footsteps you shall have a share in her happiness.

If the thought of your weakness comes to your mind, and you feel yourselves unable to practice these virtues and make these generous sacrifices, remember, Mary will help you. Yes, my dear young people, Mary will be a mediatrix at the feet of her divine Son. "There," says St. Bernard, "this Mother of mercy asks graces for you continually; she will remind Jesus of her motherly affection for Him and for us; Jesus will show His sacred body with its glorified wounds to His heavenly Father, and through this powerful intercession we can obtain all things." Yes, Mary watches over us with a mother's tender solicitude, and is happy when we turn to her with confidence. Have recourse to her then in all your temptations, in all your calamities, however great; no matter how strong your temptations may be she will strengthen you to combat them; how great soever your sins may be she will obtain your pardon, provided you are sorry for them, and renounce them sincerely. On this beautiful festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin let us consecrate ourselves to her, beg of her that she will obtain for us a holy life, and that we may die as holy a death as St. Stanislaus Kostka, whose death is related in the following manner:

Stanislaus loved Mary so much that when he heard the

Salve Regina, "Hail, holy Queen," his soul became all inflamed and he seemed rapt in ecstasy. It was the tenth of August, five days before the feast of the Assumption. Stanislaus wished very much to participate in this feast in heaven. He went to Mary's altar and made known his great desire and asked her to pray that his request be granted. It was just then the feast of St. Lawrence; he asked the holy martyr to present his petition in person to the Blessed Virgin. Stanislaus at the time was in his usual health and strength; he had so much assurance that his request would be granted, that he foretold to several persons the day of his death. He took sick, but no one thought anything about it, supposing it to be a slight indisposition. The feast of the Assumption was about to dawn, still nothing alarming was noticed. Stanislaus, however, expecting the end, took leave of his companions and superiors; he asked pardon for his failings and thanked them for the many kindnesses shown him; toward evening his sickness took a serious turn, the cold sweat stood on his forehead. Then those that stood about the bedside saw that the end was really nigh. Stanislaus prayed fervently, kissed repeatedly a picture of the Blessed Virgin, and then raising his eyes to heaven, he beheld Mary with a great number of virgins preparing to come to his bedside. The dying Stanislaus speaks to her, and in this sweet union he breathed his soul into the hands of his dear Mother. This was certainly a most beautiful death, one which the saint deserved for his holy life, and as a reward for that devotion to the Blessed Virgin with which he was filled. Be ye, my dear young friends, as I said before, full of devotion to our good Mother; imitate her virtues, love her with all your heart and you, too, will die the death of the saints; you, too, will experience in your last moments the powerful protection of Mary, and if she does not assist at your death personally, which is a great grace, still you will feel her power, and the devil will not be able to affect you in any manner. Take courage then, my dear young friends, on this, her day; throw

yourselves with confidence at the feet of Mary, and pray her to consider you her children.

Yes, O dear Mother Mary, these young people wish from the present moment to love thee as thou shouldst be loved; they have resolved to abandon every vice; accept their promises, O Mary; help them with a mother's affection and interest, so that they may always remain free from sin, and that they may continually burn with love for thee. You young people who are still good should persevere in that state until the end. But those poor wretches who have stained their baptismal robe, let them have it washed again in the tribunal of penance. Let us pray for them, that the strength of God's grace be given to them to correct their sinful lives, and then all of us may one day celebrate together this glorious feast in heaven, in company with the angelic choirs.

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(SEPTEMBER 8.)

GOSPEL. *Matt.* i. 1-16. Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac: and Isaac begot Jacob: and Jacob begot Judas, and his brethren. And Judas begot Phares and Zara of Thamar: and Phares begot Esron: and Esron begot Aram. And Aram begot Aminadab: and Aminadab begot Naasson: and Naasson begot Salmon. And Salmon begot Booz of Rahab: and Booz begot Obed of Ruth: and Obed begot Jesse: and Jesse begot David the king. And David the king begot Solomon of her who was wife of Urias. And Solomon begot Roboam: and Roboam begot Abias: and Abias begot Asa. And Asa begot Josaphat: and Josaphat begot Joram: and Joram begot Ozias. And Ozias begot Joatham: and Joatham begot Achaz: and Achaz begot Ezechias. And Ezechias begot Manasses: and Manasses begot Amon: and Amon begot Josias. And Josias begot Jechonias and his brethren in the transmigration of Babylon. And after the transmigration of Babylon, Jechonias begot Salathiel: and Salathiel begot Zorobabel. And Zorobabel begot Abiud: and Abiud begot Eliacim: and Eliacim begot Azor. And Azor begot Sadoc: and Sadoc begot Achim: and

Achim begot Eliud. And Eliud begot Eleazar: and Eleazar begot Mathan: and Mathan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

WHAT a beautiful feast this is on which we celebrate the birth of the Blessed Virgin! The Church sings in her anthems of solemn celebration, "Thy birth, O Virgin Mother of God, has filled the whole world with joy, for from thee is born the Son of justice, who, freeing the human race from malediction, has heaped upon them many benedictions, and having conquered death has given us eternal life." Let us celebrate the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary with great devotion.

But now let me follow the flight of my imagination: I see bands of angels descend from paradise, to celebrate the birth of this child. About her cradle are thousands of angels, held there by the affection servants feel for their mistress; joyful is their union, glorious their song; they bow in deep respect, they adorn the cradle with flowers, heavenly music is played and fills the house of Joachim and Ann who, rapt in contemplation of God's wonders, stand there admiring the beautiful face of the infant. The patriarch of Jerusalem wrote, "The face of the Blessed Virgin Mary, from her very birth, shone with a kind of divine light."

My dear young friends, let us also join the myriads of angels at the birth of Mary; let us exult with them, let us celebrate with becoming joy the birth of the most beautiful, the most pure, the most holy of creatures! You must not think that she was born in sin, like other mortals; she was exempt from the curse which Adam brought upon the human race. We are born in sin, the curse of God is on us from our very conception, because we belong to a wicked race, but Mary was not touched by that guilt of Adam, for she was to be the Mother of God. We, as St. Paul says, have been children of anger, but she was a child of joy. It is of faith that Mary was born free from sin; she came into the world, therefore, pure and immaculate, fit from the very beginning to be an

instrument in the hands of God for the completion of His designs for the salvation of mankind. Providence had formed the idea of the Blessed Virgin and had brought that idea into existence.

When Mary was three years old she devoted herself to God's service in the Temple in solitude and retirement from the distraction of this world. Thus she co-operated with God in making herself worthy of His love. After such an offering, my dear young friends, would it not appear to you that this young and holy maiden should consider herself secure, and pay no further attention to her innocence and holiness? But no; Mary increased her vigilance to preserve herself pure and immaculate. The Temple was to her an asylum where that delicate purity could be preserved. St. Bonaventure says that she would rise at midnight to pray; during the day she would busy herself with embroidery, sewing and mending. Her whole occupation was to sanctify her soul and live up to the dignity of one called by God to a glorious work on this earth. "She was planted," says St. John Damascene, "in the garden of the Lord as a fruitful olive tree; every virtue flourished in her." After a period of time she returned to her parents and there led the same holy life. She had no intimate friends but her saintly parents; she had no desire but to show them love, respect and obedience. Whatever threatened to raise a shadow of wrong to her innocence, she scrupulously avoided; at the Annunciation she was much troubled at the sight of an angel.

What a lesson for us, my dear young friends! Mary had nothing to fear, having been preserved by the will of God from original sin. She never felt a secret repugnance to being good, she never had an inclination to evil; pleasures and vices had no allurements for her; still, with all those safeguards of grace, she was extremely careful and used every means to preserve in herself the fulness of grace which was intrusted to her. But you, my young friends, so frail, so inconstant in good, so exposed to many dangers, and so

much tempted by Satan, do you watch carefully so as not to lose the great treasure of grace? Ah, many young people instead of being very careful expose themselves to all dangers; they even seek the society of bad companions; they do not place a guard over their senses, especially their eyes, and in this way they lose the grace of God, and fall into sin. Many come to the use of reason and then throw away this precious gift of innocence and abandon themselves to vice. They drive Our Lord from their heart and give themselves over to the devil; they are not grieved at the loss of the friendship of God, which is worth more than all the wealth of the world. What blindness and wickedness this is! You, who are still innocent, follow the example of Mary; use every possible means to guard against any defilement of sin.

Let me relate to you a little story. Godfried, third duke of Brabent, after the death of his father came into possession of many states, but he was still so young that the sceptre of government could not be trusted into his hands. The neighboring people, who had been at continual war with the old duke, took advantage of this weakness of the government, took up arms and invaded the states of the infant duke, not supposing that they would meet with much resistance to their unjust designs. The nobles of the state hastened to the defense of their child-prince; but there was no leader to head the army. One of the officers proposed that the child should be brought to the front in its cradle, and that the army would be inspired with courage at the sight of it. This was done. The sight of the cradle and the sound of the poor child's cries gave them such courage that they attacked the enemy with fury, and drove them back in confusion. In your temptations you, too, will be moved to make great efforts against the devil if you think of Mary in her little cradle; you will also be protected, you will feel new strength born in your soul, you will make a bold stand against the enemy, put him to flight, and preserve in your souls the divine grace. Have a devotion to the birth of the Blessed Virgin, honor

her on this day with a special love. Mary will not forget you, she will be generous of her gifts. When princesses of this world give great favors to their subjects on their birthdays, will not the generous and good-hearted Queen of heaven make presents on this day to those who devoutly ask for them? Say with St. Germanus, "We beg of thee, O holiest Virgin, on this day which commemorates thy birth, to bring peace to all the world, and to our souls grace and divine mercy."

FEAST OF ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL.

(SEPTEMBER 29.)

GOSPEL. *Matt.* xviii. 1-10. At that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who, thinkest thou, is the greater in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them. And said: Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven. And he that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea. Wo to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come, but nevertheless wo to that man by whom the scandal cometh. And if thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.

TO-DAY we celebrate the feast of St. Michael, that great, powerful angel and prince of the heavenly army, who took up the vindication of the honor of God's name against Lucifer and the rebellious angels, and spoke the words, "Who is like God?" which give him his name. We must suppose that the

combat was a great one; we do not know what weapons they used, or in what manner they fought, but we know that the victory remained with St. Michael.

As a reward of his fidelity, God gave him the particular care of His Church, to defend her in all her trials. This is the reason that we celebrate his feast, that we may have an opportunity to thank God that He has chosen and given us this protector of the Church of God on earth. Let me merely say a few words on this great archangel, but let me show as clearly as I can that it is to our advantage to have a devotion to him, because he has been destined by almighty God to help us—particularly in our agony when we are about to pass from this world to the next. I shall also speak of our guardian angel to whom we should have a special devotion, because he is always attentive to our wants.

From the very first moment of our existence God gives us an angel to remain with us until the hour of our death. "He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

St. Frances of Rome, who honored her guardian angel with a daily devotion, once saw him in the form of a beautiful boy of seven years; his hair was bright as gold, and he was dressed in rich clothing. St. Ludwina also enjoyed continual familiarity and sweetest conversation with her guardian angel; he appeared to her often when she was in affliction, and she rejoiced at sight of him and forgot all her sorrows. St. Cecilia said to Valerian, "Let me tell you, that I have an angel, a companion who guards my body with the greatest care, and if you insult me it will cost you your life." Anastasius, the heretical emperor who persecuted the Church, saw the angel of Sabba, the abbot, who was begging the tyrant to spare his monks. God wished to do us a great favor, my dear young friends, in giving us an angel from the realms of bliss as our companion, to be always at our side; one who would foresee many dangers and lead us away from them, and defend us, day and night, against the attacks of the devil. "In their

hands they shall bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone." St. Bernard, thinking of this great favor, cried out in rapture, "O immense love of God, who has for man created a new office among the angels, that of protecting us!"

Our guardian angel sends us good inspirations, offers our prayers to God, brings us consolation in trouble, and keeps us from falling into sin. Yes, my dear young people, if you have triumphed over some great temptation, it was through the prayers of your angel that you escaped. You would have been but too ready to listen to the voice of sin had you not been warned in time, and thus brought to remain faithful to God. You have fought the devil through your angel, who is still, as of old, the natural enemy of Satan. Show yourselves grateful to him for all this good. Judith, who cut off the head of her enemy Holofernes, ascribes the power of her arm to the help of an angel: she said, "As the Lord liveth, His angel hath been my keeper." Daniel, the holy prophet, when he had been locked up in the den of hungry lions for twenty-four hours, said to the king, "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut up the mouths of the lions, and they have not hurt me."

You ought to have great respect and reverence for your guardian angel. How well and devoutly we would live were we strongly persuaded that a great spirit from heaven, powerful and holy, is with us all the time! Would a wicked youth utter impure words in the hearing of his companions if he realized that his guardian angel also heard him? What a miserable man he would be who, knowing this, would curse and blaspheme God in the very face of a powerful angel, who would avenge the honor of God's name! Shame would overcome us were we persuaded that that pure spirit were a witness to our impurities. Do not young people often sin because they say to themselves that no one sees them? God, who is everywhere, sees you always, and the angel whom God has given you as a companion is also a witness of your sin.

How keenly that spirit must feel it when you turn away from God, your eternal salvation! The angels of peace weep bitterly at our infidelity. St. Paul, the monk, once saw, by God's permission, a great sinner enter a church; his soul was foul with wickedness and he walked between two demons who held him in chains. His guardian angel, with a most dejected mien, followed at a short distance. The man went to confession, and when he came out of church his beauty was restored to him. His guardian angel, with a joyous face, was close beside him, and the chains and the devils had disappeared.

"Wherever you are," says St. Bernard, "remember the respect you ought to have for your angel; be careful to do nothing that you would be ashamed of doing before any one else."

Learn to repeat this little prayer, to which an indulgence of one hundred days is attached:

Angel of God, my guardian dear,
To whom His love commits me here,
Ever this day be at my side,
To light and guard, to rule and guide.
Amen.

In all your dangers have recourse to him for help and counsel. St. Bernard says again, "Be great friends with your angel; speak to him often in your mind, for he sees what you are thinking of."

Blessed Joanna from her childhood had great friendship for her guardian angel; she always consulted him and proposed her difficulties to him and then let him decide what should be done. She lost her parents early in life, and her companions used to pity her, but Joanna took them to a church, and there showing them a beautiful angel, said: "This angel is my father and my mother, my counsellor and master, my teacher in everything." If we had such a faith in our guardian angel what great benefits we would receive!

Honor also the great archangel Michael, pray to him often, especially at the end of Mass, when the priest says: "St. Michael the archangel, defend us in battle; be our protection against the malice and snares of the devil. We humbly beseech God to command him: and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the divine power thrust into hell Satan and the other evil spirits who roam through the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen."

Now be really convinced of this consoling truth, that we all have an angel, that he is always with us, and that he ought to be our greatest friend.

FEAST OF THE HOLY ROSARY.

(First Sunday of October.)

Gospel. *Luke* i. 26-38. *At that time* the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the Angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father: and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the Angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the Angel answering, said to her: The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren; because no work shall be impossible with God. And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word.

Of all the practices of devotion with which we honor the Blessed Virgin, the most beautiful, the most dear to her is

certainly the recitation of the Rosary. Mary herself instituted that form of prayer, and when she gave the Rosary to St. Dominic she said to him: "My son Dominic, preach the Rosary everywhere; it is the form of prayer which I love best."

Let us see in what its excellence consists, and how we should recite it, so that it may be acceptable to the Blessed Virgin and of benefit to ourselves.

To recognize the excellence of the Rosary it is enough for us to think of the beautiful prayers of which it is composed; it is made up of the *Our Father*, a greater prayer than which is not known, for it was taught us by Christ Himself, composed by the Son of God to His Father. This prayer contains petitions for every necessity of life.

Then follows the *Hail Mary*, the salutation to the Mother of God, by the archangel Gabriel, the words of which were placed in his mouth by God Himself who inspired them; afterward a part was added by St. Elizabeth at the visit which Mary paid to her, after the Annunciation, and, lastly, the Church also puts in a few words.

St. Bernard says: "Heaven smiles, the angels rejoice, the devils fly, hell trembles whenever we say a devout *Hail Mary*."

To these great prayers we join a meditation on the mysteries of our holy religion, the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ in its principal points at least. With the angel we go to Nazareth and contemplate the Annunciation, and the Word made flesh without ceasing to be the Son of God. From there we hasten over the mountains with the Blessed Virgin to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth; then we wander to Bethlehem where Our Lord is born in a poor stable; and afterwards we go with the Virgin to offer her divine Son in the Temple, where Our Saviour was manifested for the first time to Simeon and to Anna the prophetess; then we see Him living a quiet life in Nazareth.

Now begins the public life of Our Lord; we meditate on

His Passion and death; His Resurrection and Ascension, the coming down of the Holy Ghost, the crowning in heaven of Mary the Mother of Jesus. When we offer these meditations to God, united with the *Hail Marys*, they certainly will have more power than if we composed a prayer of our own and said it ever so piously.

Of course this devotion is acceptable to Mary only when it is recited properly and devoutly.

Do you think that we honor Mary when we recite the Rosary with wilful distractions? That is no prayer; such prayers do honor to no saint. When St. Stanislaus said the Rosary, his face showed that he was sunk in affectionate devotion; it seemed as if the Blessed Virgin were before him, seated on a throne and he were kneeling at the foot of it.

What a great advantage it would be to us if we recited the Rosary in a faultless manner. With great generosity will Mary scatter her graces upon our bodies and souls, and beg blessings for our temporal, but especially our spiritual, affairs. Mary will defend us against all our enemies, she will cast her mantle over us; if we are still innocent she will preserve our innocence for us; if we have been wicked she will obtain for us the grace of conversion. In our hands the beads may be the means of converting many from sin; we may lead back to the Church the renegade from his religion; the poor sinner that is steeped in vice will find strength and better counsel; the drunkard will be able to reform. Blessed are the young people who live in families where the Rosary is said every evening just before retiring for the night. There must be a special blessing on them. The blessing of Jesus and Mary will enrich those families with temporal and spiritual blessings; there will be found peace and happiness; crime will find no place there. "The fear of the Lord is his treasure." The custom of reciting the Rosary in a family shows that it is a good and pious family, where there will be heard no curses, discord, or blasphemies; the vice of impurity will not dare to enter there. God governs

that household, and God is enthroned there by the united praying of the Rosary.

You may say that you should like to say the Rosary sometimes, but your parents never ask you to say it, and so it is omitted. Do not throw the fault on others; have a Rosary of your own, carry it as scrupulously as you wear the Scapular; never be without it, but keep it in your pocket, and when you occasionally touch it, you will be reminded to recite it. It would be good to introduce it in your home on the feast of the Rosary or on some other appropriate feast. Your parents ought to be glad to have such a practice proposed by you, for it will prove that your religious training has had some effect on you.

For the love of the Blessed Virgin, say the Rosary, say it in her honor, think of God, and of prayer; when you recite it, do not simply run off a large number of *Hail Marys.* Love the Rosary, therefore, my dear young people, it is a precious thing; recite it every evening, as Leo XIII., the Holy Father, advises, and no doubt this devotion will bring to you such spiritual benefits that you will gain a high place in heaven.

St. Dominic tells us that no one will be lost who recites the Rosary with devotion.

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

(November 1.)

Gospel. *Matt.* v. 1-12. And Jesus, seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain, and when he was set down, his disciples came unto him, and opening his mouth he taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven.

On this glorious day the Church opens to our view the gates of heaven, in order to show us the great number of her children who there enjoy the eternal reward of a good life. There we see the prophets of God, who were faithful to His word; the Apostles who fearlessly preached the word of God all over the world; the holy martyrs who shed their blood and gave their lives for the truth; the confessors who not only in word but in deed practiced virtue; the beautiful virgins who preserved their purity. There we will see saints in every condition of life, from every calling: the young, the old, the rich, the poor, and so great is their number that they cannot be counted. They are clothed in white, with palm branches in their hands, and standing around the throne of God they sing celestial hymns. What a great happiness to celebrate this day in heaven! Will it not be a great joy for us one day to be in paradise, there with the angels and saints to sing the praises of God!

St. Francis heard an angel play on a harp, and he was so enchanted by it that he lost all knowledge of time and forgot where he was. On this earth there are continual trials, but in heaven with the angels and saints we have nothing more to suffer; we shall have the same riches as God, and be glad with His gladness. "And thus we shall always be with the Lord." O consoling thought! Shall we all who are on this earth be in heaven? will no one be excluded? Is it possible that any of my young friends will be excluded from heaven? Perhaps not a few will meet with that fate; for those only shall possess the kingdom of God who have imitated the lives of the saints: those who have faithfully served God, who have lived a good life, who have not sullied their souls by great sins, or if they have committed any, have repented of them. Those will go to heaven who have observed the law of God exactly and have done much good. Raise your eyes to heaven,

my dear young people, and see those who are there and what they have done. The Apostles who consecrated themselves to the service of religion, and labored incessantly to spread the Gospel over all the world; the martyrs, who were real soldiers in resisting the tyrants in their attempts to make them give up the faith; repentant sinners, who punished their bodies for their sensuality; old men who were faithful to the end of a long life; young men and women who early in life opened their ears to the voice of God, and followed the teaching of Christ; boys and girls, who merited heaven for having pleased the Master of heaven and earth by their beautiful lives and deaths. My dear young friends, how ashamed we ought to be when we read of so many great examples of holy lives while we do so very little, and still expect to get to heaven! These saints avoided sins and even imperfections; and rather than do anything to offend God, they preferred to suffer the most horrible torments. On the occasion of sin, did you say, "I will not commit it"? When you were with a companion who used bad language, did you say to him, "Be silent," or go away from him?

The saints prayed day and night; they did not content themselves with such short prayers as we say. We do not love prayer, we omit it on any excuse. Some of the saints were sinners at one time, but by the grace of God they rose from their fall, and performed the most severe penances until the hour of their death. Once a great sinner went to confession to St. Vincent de Paul. After hearing him the saint gave him a penance for seven years. As the man was really penitent, this did not dismay him; he thought it rather a small punishment for such grievous faults. "Father," said he, "do you think I can save my soul by doing so small a penance?" "Yes," said the saint. "Fast on bread and water three times a week for these years." The sinner wept bitterly, and thanked God he had obtained pardon so easily. Seeing the sincerity and depth of the man's sorrow the saint remitted the penance, and told him to recite three *Our Fathers* and

three *Hail Marys.* The penitent had scarcely finished his penance when he fell dead at the saint's feet. Afterwards he appeared to St. Vincent and told him that his penance had been accepted by God as sufficient, and that he even did not have to pass through purgatory, because God had taken his real sorrow as full atonement for his sins. We frequently have great difficulty in disclosing our sins; shame, not sorrow, often closes our mouths. The saints did not shrink from suffering as we do; with us the least trouble is a great trial—we prefer, come what may, a pleasant life.

The saints looked upon this life as a pilgrimage to their fatherland; they yearned for heaven. Everything in this world disgusted them, while we are attached to the world and its vanities. We have no longing for heaven, we would live here forever if it were possible. Heaven requires violence and exertion; cowards and lazy people will not get there; if you continue to live in this manner, you will never be saints in heaven. St. Augustine says if you do not do all in your power to imitate the lives of the saints you shall not have a share in their happiness. On this day, then, let us make a firm resolution to imitate the saints, to detest sin, to practice virtue and to do all the good we can. Pray to the saints, and especially to your patrons, that they may intercede for you before Our Lord until you shall have arrived safely in heaven. Pray also to the Queen of all saints, the most holy Mary, that she, too, may interest herself in your spiritual welfare that you may begin now to work out your salvation and persevere in this work until the end. "Queen of all saints, pray for us."

FEAST OF ALL SOULS.

(NOVEMBER 2.)

GOSPEL. *John* v. 25-29. *At that time, Jesus said to the multitude of the Jews:* Amen, amen, I say to you, that the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself: so he hath given to the Son also to have life in himself; and he hath

given him power to do judgment, because he is the Son of man. Wonder not at this, for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.

After our holy mother the Church has celebrated with great pomp and solemnity the feast of All Saints; after having raised our eyes to heaven to look upon the great joy above us, so that we may be attracted to do something to merit a place there, she proposes to us to-day a more gloomy but still a most consoling practice. She bids us make a commemoration of those who are detained in the prison of purgatory: we are to think of the sufferings of the poor souls detained there, that we may come to their assistance. She tells us that it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be freed from their sins. I know that Christians in general do not need much persuasion to make them think of this holy work. We know that if we go to confession and communion for the benefit of those poor souls, if we fast, give alms, or have Masses said that by these means we appease the justice of God.

The holy souls now know the value of good works and indulgences: but they cannot do any good action, nor can they gain any indulgences except those obtained by the living and applied to them. Still there are many young people who think so little of the life to come, that even the state of purgatory is to them a matter of no moment; they have no thought of the great pains endured there. They come to church on this day from custom, and by their exterior irreverence scandalize the faithful and affect the benefit of or destroy the good altogether of many a prayer which would be said for those detained in that place of torment.

Paradise, my dear young friends, is that most beautiful place, that magnificent celestial city, whose walls are built of gold and precious stones, where none can dwell except those who are pure and immaculate. Hence it is that the souls in

purgatory, how holy soever they may be and dear to God, are detained in that prison until they have atoned for every sin, even the smallest. Most of us, even the best, have to accuse ourselves of slight lies, little acts of disobedience, and many other venial faults, for which we have not had even a thought of sorrow: still we are told, "Thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing."

This atonement is made by suffering which God inflicts as punishment in order to purify those souls. This suffering consists of a fire so terrible that the hottest flames on earth would be pleasant in comparison. St. Gregory says that it is a fire of the same nature as hell. We would have hearts of stone if we saw people burning in a fire and would not try to rescue them. We know that the poor souls are in such a terrible purifying fire; then shall we not try to succor them? God has given us the right to come to their relief by our prayers.

The souls in purgatory deserve our sympathy; they are holy souls, destined for heaven and the sight of God, and many of them are connected with us by the ties of blood, if not of religion and humanity. They are souls who were once on earth, breathed the same air, lived in the same houses, and slept in the beds which we now occupy. Perhaps in that sea of flames is your father or mother, brother or sister, whom you pretended to love so tenderly in life, whose property you inherited, who has sacrificed all for you. Are you not almost bound by justice to help him or her? "They are your flesh and blood."

My dear young people, your dead friends and relatives who died well may be there, and this relationship appeals to your kindly feelings. Remember your father and mother, who when on their death-bed said: "My child, will you forget me after I am dead?" And you replied with anguish: "I promise, with all my heart, that as long as I live I shall not forget to pray for you." And yet scarce had a few days passed when you forgot all your affectionate vows. Modern

Catholic young men may perhaps say there is no purgatory; because nowadays pretended enlightenment is so great that our wise people know everything. They deny some of the dogmas of our faith, things of common belief among us, which rest on good foundation. But I am sure that your Catholic education has impressed on your minds the reality of purgatory, though you may be rather negligent in the performance of the duty of praying for the dead. Perhaps you say a few prayers for them, but they are cold; you hear some Masses for them, but with distraction; you say the Rosary for them, but carelessly. Now that you are firmly persuaded of your duty in this regard, pray earnestly for the dead and you may be sure God will hear you and apply the satisfaction of your prayers to them. Should your prayers be the means of releasing a soul from purgatory sooner than it would otherwise have been released, how grateful will not that soul be to you! how interested in your behalf! how anxious for all your needs, temporal and spiritual! That soul will certainly stand before the throne of God and say, "Lord, I recommend to Thee my benefactor: it is he whom Thou didst hear in my behalf, and in answer to his prayers liberated me from the flames of purgatory. Reward him then, O my God, for that kindness." If that person is in the state of grace, he will persevere in the love of God to the end of his days, and should he be in sin he will obtain the grace of conversion; this soul will go also to the Blessed Virgin and will say, "To thee I commend my generous liberator; obtain for him every grace from thy divine Son; give him the necessary power to save his soul."

That soul will also approach the angels, and say: "O my dear angels of heaven, now my companions and associates, I am anxious to commend to you him who has done so much for me on earth; he has prayed to God for me, offered Masses, Rosaries and indulgences for me, so that I am now here praising God, while I should have had to stay in that place of torment a long time to come, to satisfy God's justice for my faults during life, had he not interceded for me." On all

sides will this poor liberated soul gain advocates for us, and God Himself will shower many blessings, both spiritual and temporal, on us.

Let us therefore pray diligently and with faith for the souls in purgatory; let us especially say indulgenced prayers: among which the Rosary is certainly the richest. Have your beads always in your hand and say a few *Hail Marys* on them now and then, for you know that God has mercy on the poor souls in their pains when we pray. Ask Our Lady and the saints to help them.

Cardinal Baronius knew of a person who had greatly at heart the necessities of the poor souls in purgatory. In every possible way he sought means of relieving them; he gave alms, had Masses said, prayed and had communities to pray, all for the souls in purgatory. He took sick, and when death was at hand, Satan, with his cohorts of wicked spirits, surrounded his bed. The distressed man did not know how to keep up his courage. His despair was at its worst when he saw the heavens open, and a great number of the heavenly court descending to his rescue and help; the dying man felt new courage, and asked them who they were. They answered that they were the souls that he had rescued from purgatory by his good works, and now had come to conduct him to heaven. What joy must have come over this poor man! how he must have valued that devotion to the souls in purgatory which had brought to him so many benefits, and the grace of courage at the hour of death.

St. Peter Damian when still very young lost his parents. One of his brothers gave him a home in his house, but his wife, who was a hard woman, gave him barely enough to eat. One day he found a piece of money and instead of buying something to eat with it he brought it to a priest and asked him to say a Mass for his father and mother. This holy action procured him vocation to the priesthood and he became a great saint and most useful to the Church; he was ordained priest, was Bishop of Ostia and afterwards cardinal.

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

(DECEMBER 8.)

GOSPEL. *Luke* i. 26-28. **And in the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace: the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.**

"THOU art all beautiful, O Mary! and no stain of original sin is in thee; thou art the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, the honor of our people." Such is the anthem of the Church in to-day's festival in honor of Mary. To-day we celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin and we are therefore full of joy.

From time immemorial the Church has conceded this privilege to Mary; the ancient doctors and saints taught it; but it was only in our day that it was made an article of faith, when Pius IX., in the year 1854, supported and surrounded by two hundred cardinals and bishops assembled in Rome from all parts of the world, proclaimed it as a dogma that Mary the Mother of God was preserved from original sin from the first instant of her conception; that she did not need to be purified from stain of sin; that God had created her pure and immaculate. The decree was applauded by all, amid demonstrations of the most profound respect and liveliest enthusiasm.

No less should be our joy at the recurrence of a festival that marks so wondrous a grace. But will you content yourselves with joy and exultation? Do you think it will suffice to Mary to know that you are happy? Mary desires above all that you imitate her purity. If your souls have been stained with sin she wants you to seek pardon at once, and in order that you may succeed the better she is anxious to come to your assistance. She herself wants to intercede for your pardon

at the throne of the Most High. She herself wishes to be your advocate, for she is the refuge of sinners. Under this title invoke her to-day; with the grace of God I will prove to you how well she merits that title.

Mary, who is all pure and all holy, deserves that we all should be pure and free from sin. Sin renders us abominable in the sight of God. Our soul is like a horrid desert filled with wild beasts; the vile passions of anger, revenge, and impurity dwell in it. Mary sees our unhappy condition, feels the greatest pity for us, and seeks to make us know the miserable state we are in. Many feel this and are converted, but, on the contrary, many, and among them a larger number of young people, have hardened their hearts and live in the indulgence of their vices because they prefer to walk in the broad road of sin which eventually leads to eternal death. They get further and further away from that influence which could lead them back to conversion; they avoid the church, the sacraments, the word of God, the counsels of pious people and associates, and give up the little devotion they had to the Blessed Virgin.

Mary has great compassion on even the most wicked men, and she does not desert them. She is the refuge of sinners, and provided they have a wish to lay aside the habit of sin, provided they say at least a little prayer, that bright immaculate Queen will strike off their fetters and they will be converted to God. St. Bridget says that this sweet Mother is a bait to catch souls for heaven. Honor her then, O ye sinners! Find a joy in doing it and she will obtain for you grace and salvation.

A criminal once said, "What has the Blessed Virgin ever done for me?" "What has she ever done for you, ungrateful creature!" answered an interior voice. "Do you remember the sudden death of this and that sinner? It might have been the same with you, but she obtained for you the grace of a longer life and an opportunity to do better." She thus does good, even to those who are ungrateful.

Mary of Egypt, when twelve years old, went to the wicked city of Alexandria against the express command of her mother, and there she lived a most sinful life for seventeen years. One day she saw a big crowd going to the shore to embark for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. She took a notion to go along. On the ship she behaved most scandalously and led many of the pilgrims into sin. The feast came, and she wished to witness these festivals also. When she arrived before the church she made an attempt to enter, but she felt a hand restraining her. Three times she attempted to cross the threshold, and though she made the greatest effort she could not succeed. Then she understood that her great sins were the cause of the mysterious force that prevented her from entering the church; that in her condition she was not worthy to enter the house of God and look upon the sacred relics of the Cross of Christ. She wept at the remembrance of her sins; she did not know what to do, when by the side of a house she saw a painting of the Blessed Virgin. Throwing herself at the feet of Mary she exclaimed, "Holy Virgin, who didst conceive an omnipotent God, I know well that since thou lovest purity so much and wert so pure thyself, thou oughtest to abhor such a person as I am. But O, most merciful Mother, have mercy on me! The greater my misery, the greater is my right to thy intercession. Obtain for me the grace of seeing that holy wood of the cross; and I will go where thou leadest me to do penance."

Mary heard her prayer, and obtained for her the grace to enter the church and adore the holy cross. Having come out of the church the sinner went to the desert and there did penance and became a great saint through the intercession and help of the Blessed Virgin. Thus you see that Mary feels compassion for the greatest and most disgusting sinners.

A youth of twenty-five years was dying. He had led a most sinful life, but having been converted, he was very devout to the Blessed Virgin, and became a model young man. He

was on his sick-bed and held in one hand a crucifix and in the other an image of the Blessed Virgin. He looked from one to the other and in turn kissed them. When he had received the last sacraments he confidently said: "Father, I am going to heaven, for Mary has obtained for me this grace." You also, my dear young friends, if you commend yourselves to Mary, if you are converted with a sincere heart and abandon sin, you will surely go to heaven.

But you, my dear young friends who are still innocent, do not forget on this beautiful day of the Immaculate Conception to pray to Mary. You, too, have need of Mary's protection that you may preserve your baptismal purity. Pray to her in this wise: "Obtain for me, O immaculate Virgin, that no sin may come into my soul. Obtain for me that my eyes may be preserved from the contamination of impurities; obtain for me that my ears may not hear any impious discourses against religion, purity, or charity; obtain for me that my tongue may not utter bad words, that my hands may do nothing wrong. Obtain for me, O immaculate Virgin, that my whole heart and my body may be the temple of the Holy Ghost fitted for this divine habitation by the most scrupulous purity."

"Thou art all fair, O Mary, and no stain of sin is to be found in thee."

ADVICE TO THE YOUNG ON THE LAST DAY OF THE SCHOLASTIC YEAR.

We have come, my dear young people, to the last day of the scholastic year. Of course you are all ready to sing the parting hymn, and to thank Our Lord for the many graces which have been showered upon you during this year. You have passed the term well to all appearances; you have given beautiful examples of religious fervor and devotion to all about you; you have received the sacraments of confession

and communion often; your life, in short, has been such as good and well conducted young people ought to lead. I say, I, too, rejoice with you that so much good has been done, and that if there be young people who are not what they ought to be, who offend God, that there are still many others who please Him, and who abstain from committing sins as much as lies in human power.

My only thought of sadness is, that this is the last time in this school year that I shall have the opportunity to speak to you, but especially because I fear that some of you may not remain as good as you have been, when away from the holy influences of this place, and that you will not persevere in the good life you have begun, but will allow yourselves to be led away by bad companions, of which the world is full. It is for this reason, before you go out into the world, I would like to say a few words as a sign of the love which I bear you. The first and perhaps the best advice I can give you, is to remain faithful in doing good, for it is certain that only they will win the crown of eternal glory who shall have persevered to the end, and that all your good works of many years will be lost if you come to a bad end. Perseverance in the devout recitation of your prayers, morning and evening, is of the first necessity; as long as you pray you will be good; as soon as you give it up and become careless you will fall into sin. Never omit your prayers, even once, for, remember well, it is an artifice of the devil to get you to omit your prayers sometimes; he will then more easily get you to omit them altogether, and in this way you will live the life of an animal more than that of a Christian. Prayer was always the most sacred occupation of the saints; it is the key to heaven.

Remember the observance of Sundays and feasts that the Church has retained among its public holy days. Of Sunday remember that it is the Lord's day, and must be consecrated entirely to Him, and should not be spent altogether in recreation.

The emperor Constantine called Sunday the day of prayer.

Hear Mass with devotion; do not rush to a low Mass, and get away again, merely to fulfil the precept. Persevere in the hearing of the word of God. How many young people, growing up, neglect to hear the word of God, and become more and more careless in hearing instructions on spiritual things, which are so necessary for the vigor of the soul! They lose the faculty of distinguishing good from evil; through forgetfulness they become ignorant of their religion, as ignorant, in fact, as if they never had heard the truths of religion before. "Listen and your soul shall live."

It is not enough to know the Creed and the Commandments; you must hear the explanation of them also, because unless you listen to the explanation of these truths, you will remain in your sins, and you will not strive to make the least progress in a good Christian life. Persevere in the use of the holy sacraments of confession and communion. Nothing preserves us so well as the frequent approach of the sacraments; no prayer or spiritual practice is as powerful. My dear young friends, you are exposed in your young days to many dangers. You ought to counteract the influence of these dangers by holy communion. You may ask how often you ought to receive. Father Segneri the younger, a very skillful instructor of youth, commands you to go every Sunday; though I would think once a month, faithfully observed, is also right.

St. Augustine also counsels his readers to go every Sunday, provided they are not attached to the frivolities of the world. You must not think, however, that this is too often. Remember what the saints have done to merit heaven; they omitted nothing that would lead them to higher perfection. Persevere in devotion to the Mother of God; be her dear children; go to communion on all her feasts; recite every day three *Hail Marys*, with these words, "Dear Mother, preserve me from mortal sin."

Recite the Rosary every day; never go to bed without having devoutly prayed to her, and asked her blessing. Remem-

ber the words of St. Antonius, that the devout children of Mary must necessarily be saved. She leads them to heaven by the hand, as it were. St. Bonaventure says: "By the mercy of Mary, heaven is filled with souls."

Always avoid the occasion of sin; avoid bad companions, be not the friend of the wicked who are ministers of the devil; there are many such in the world, who try to ruin others by their scandals and bad examples. You will be like innocent lambs among ravenous wolves; you will be thrown into the society of people without religion, without the fear of God, who will laugh at your piety and devotion, who indulge in most horrible conversation. Your innocence is threatened, your morality and your faith are in danger. I say to you be faithful to your former instructions, to your former good training. It is a difficult matter, indeed, but God will keep you if you rely on Him. Under all these difficulties remember the words of Our Lord: "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.

"And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire."

Be on your guard, my dear children, against the first approach of evil; you carry your innocence in very frail vessels, and the least want of caution will break it; a look, a word might be your ruin. Small sins develop into great ones; you begin with little insignificant things, and end with great ones. You are walking in the midst of difficulties that will perplex you.

Be not afraid, my dear young people; the battle is severe, and the victories are few, but trust to God and He will give you strength to hold out, and will enlighten your mind that you may be wise enough to foresee the danger and avoid it.

A saint once said that the very air we breathe is dangerous to innocence. Can you now remember without tears and

shame, the miserable falls into sin, even after you had risen to a certain degree of goodness and steadfastness in good? David, who was a man according to God's heart, fell, and so did Solomon, the wisest of kings. A certain James, a hermit, after a life of sanctity in the desert, and after having worked many miracles, fell into a great sin. You have heard of Origen. He was a very learned man and gifted with wonderful talents; of these he was conscious and proud; he thought himself wiser than all the doctors of his day; he rebelled against the Church, and it is uncertain whether he was converted before his death. This Origen in his youth left his parents in order to become a martyr. This was that same Origen, who allowed himself to be robbed of all his goods for the faith. This was the same Origen who wrote so many books in defense of the Catholic Church. Who could have thought that a youth so ardent for the faith could fall so low? His mother had to watch him; he wanted to run out into the street as the martyrs were led past, that he might get among the condemned, and thus become a martyr, too. Origen, too, was the son of the holy martyr Leonidas, a man full of noble sentiment for the honor of God's religion, and evidently young Origen had inherited these sentiments. Leonidas was a holy man and considered the religious education of his child his great duty on this earth. He used to go at night to the bedside of the sleeping Origen, and feast on the innocence of that good child; and then, making the sign of the cross on his breast, he would venerate the little body of that boy as the temple of the Holy Ghost. Origen lost all these advantages and graces by pride.

Such examples ought to make us fear; when the cedars of Lebanon fall, we miserable beings are not going to stand. "The Lord has thrown them down, and has not spared them." Be then on your guard, I say to you, and watch the first approach of evil, which is going to bring after it a whole train of mischief; it is the first step that counts, says the French proverb. Sin is like the egg of a crocodile, which is certainly

small, but when the egg is hatched, a horrible animal comes out of it; sin enters the house, fixes itself there and strengthens its position; the wool takes the color of the dye very slowly. This is the reason that the sins of youth give a tinge to the whole future life.

This is, perhaps, the last occasion, my dear young friends, to talk to you, before you go into the world to work out your own salvation; you will be drawn away, perhaps, by the evil maxims of the world, you will fall into sin, and be spiritually ruined. But when you are old remember that I have said to you, that the arms of religion, like those of a holy mother, are continually stretched out to you to take you back to her loving bosom, and to repeat to you those kind words which you have heard. Let me to-day, at your parting, press you to my bosom, as did that glorious mother of St. Louis, king of France. She took the young boy into her arms, and said: "Dear as you are to me, I would rather have you dead in my arms, than that you should commit a mortal sin." Let me say the same to you, whilst I embrace you: that I would rather hear that you died in the Lord and went to heaven, than that you became faithless men and went to hell. O if you only knew what great designs God has in store for you! O that the beginning of your youthful piety, that the care which you now have over your eyes, that the virginal delicacy of great innocence, might continue all your life; then you would ere long become great in the sight of Our Lord.

The only danger is that you will some day fall into sin. After such Christian training as you have received you ought to say with the Apostle that nothing will be able to separate you from the love of God—neither tribulation, nor difficulties, nor hunger, nor poverty, nor dangers, nor persecutions, nor violence, no, not even death. When you have thus formed a strong resolution and built a firm foundation of faith and have begun to serve God it is worth while to persevere to the end. The crown is only to be expected at the end of the fight. What glory then will yours be when you

will be called to your coronation! The celebrations of this world will pale before this great day of yours, when you shall receive your crown.

Dear Jesus, I turn to Thee, I pray Thee to interpose Thy power, that these young people, now my friends, may remain faithful in Thy love and service; free them from the great evil of the world, sin; free them from the cunning of the enemy of their salvation; give them strength and courage in their struggle to keep themselves honest, moral, charitable, and devout.

I have recourse also in a special manner to thee, O Mother of God, to recommend to-day to thee these young people. Often have they placed themselves under thy protection; make them persevere in their good works until thou seest them safe in heaven. O Lord, bless these young people who are about to go out into the world. During this year they have been an honor to Thy holy name. In this place of shelter they prayed devoutly and studied faithfully; bless them before they part.

Bless also their parents; give their families the grace that in them may reign the fear of the Lord and the love of one another. Give them the grace to edify their children that they may be encouraged to persevere.

Bless also their zealous teachers, who have spent all this time in their education; bless their labors, that the seed which they have sown with so much solicitude may bring great results and they may be consoled with the thought that they have done much for the "glory of God."

CLOSING ADVICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE AFTER A RETREAT.

We have, my dear young friends, come to the end of this holy retreat. I am sure that none of you will regret the time spent in making these holy exercises; on the contrary, you

must certainly be glad that you made them. May God be blessed for all His mercies. I am consoled with the thought that you have been graciously favored by God in this retreat. I can testify that you corresponded faithfully to His grace by assisting most zealously at the services, and I felt great joy in my soul when I saw you prostrate before Our Lord in preparation for the reception of Jesus, the immaculate Lamb. But now I am much concerned about your perseverance; dark clouds obscure the brightness of the future.

You have made a retreat, have remedied all the mistakes and errors of your life; you are now on the right road, remain on it; you are now cleansed, remain innocent; you have detested vice, continue in these sentiments: therefore I wish to remind you of several very necessary things, which you are to carry with you through life.

First, remain faithful to your convictions that virtue must be acquired and practiced and that evil must be avoided. Let me say, as Tobias said to his son, "Take heed thou never consent to sin." God has given you at your Baptism the garb of innocence. He expects that you will bring that garment with you as your wedding garment to the great banquet He is preparing in paradise. St. John, the Apostle of love, wrote, "My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin."

Blanche, the great queen of France, said to her son every day, "I would rather see you dead, than know you had committed a sin." St. Leonard of Port Maurice says, "In this world I have but one enemy, and that is sin, and from the first I have sworn to wage war against it all my days to the end of my life." Fly from sin as from a serpent.

My dear children, you are in the morning of life, and are engaged in sowing the seeds of future merit and glory, both for this life and eternity; remember the words of the Holy Ghost, "He that soweth iniquity shall reap evils." Do not say I have sinned, but nothing has happened to me. I still enjoy life, laugh and am strong. It is God's word that the

sinner will harvest evil, that he will gather thistles on his last day, and his reward will be that of the tares and weeds of the field. He will be bound in bundles, and be cast into eternal flames. The time of sowing is past, the summer has come, now it is too late to plant again and the harvest time will see him poor indeed. He will experience bitterness from sin, not only in the other world, but even in this, for there is no peace for the wicked; he will be hunted up and down this world by the cruel hounds of his passions, and the strength of his body and soul will be expended fruitlessly in looking for happiness. Therefore, if you consent to sin, you will experience the greatest unhappiness in this world; continual remorse will follow you, and a longing after a better life. You will find that sin is like that piece of bread of which Job speaks, which when swallowed, is turned into gall. If you serve the devil and sin, you will serve a cruel master; he will make you feel his tyranny more than the poor slave that is bound by chains, and is ordered about under the lash of the tyrant. The devil will put his yoke upon you, he will make you work like a slave for his own purposes.

To avoid sin fly from the occasion of it; think of the advice given by a holy hermit to the young. "Fly at once, fly far, fly always." Avoid in a special manner bad companions; you do not, my dear young people, know now, but you will know in the future, when you have unhappily gone through the experience of it, how destructive bad example is; how it grasps about for victims. Young people are on the road to perdition from the mere fact that they keep bad company; the devil need not trouble himself to tempt them. But who are bad companions? You know them well; those who use bad language, who are immodest, who steal, drink or spend their time in saloons. Bad conversation does much harm to the innocent youth.

Be on your guard, my dear young friends, against the great sin of scandal; "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me," says Our Lord, "it were better for

him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." Jesus came to save souls and He shed His blood for them. Scandal robs Our Lord of the souls which belong to Him by this purchase. It is a terrible sin to wrest from the hands of Our Lord a soul ready to go to heaven; to give it into the hands of the devil for eternal destruction. It would be an infinitely lighter fault to rob a church of a chalice than to take a soul away from God. "Thou hath redeemed us to God in Thy blood." At the hour of our death the sin of scandal will give us the greatest pain. A heretic after his conversion used to say, "The sins which I have committed, though very great, are forgiven after a sincere penance, but the sins which I made others commit give me great concern, because I do not know where they are to end. I have been the cause of them, and will have to answer for them at the judgment seat of God, at the last day."

If you are conscious that you have given scandal, and that in consequence a soul is in danger of being damned, then indeed have fear, because that soul will call for vengeance for all eternity; it does not seem possible that the victim of your scandal should be condemned to hell, while you, the author of the scandal, enjoy the delights of paradise. You must repair the scandal as far as possible and try to gain many souls to Jesus.

You are, my good children, to live in a wicked world, and for that reason you must be constantly on your guard. You ought to live in the world like the birds, that keep away from the ground; they descend only to look for food, and as soon as they obtain it they rise again to the sky; they know by instinct that they have many enemies on the earth. In this way you should be detached from the place where there are so many snares laid for your destruction. Hold communication with the world as you would with a traitor; you would not trust him, no matter how fine his exterior might be; you would watch his every movement. So true is this, that Our

Lord, before parting with His disciples, warned them against the evil of this earth and prayed His heavenly Father, "not that He should take them out of the world, but that He should keep them from evil."

On all sides you will meet with bad example, but do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. It is no excuse to say that you have seen others doing evil; remember young Tobias. He saw the other Jews in captivity at the time approach the altar of the false gods to curry favor with their captors, and thereby become favorites; but he went every year to Jerusalem, to the Temple of the Lord, there to adore the God of Israel. He witnessed the apostasy of the young, he saw the old men bend their tottering knees to the idols, but he did not imitate their bad example. The Scriptures say that the number of fools is infinite. You, too, may be called foolish for being faithful, and humanly speaking it may be foolish to lose all temporal advantages by waiting for the eternal reward; but soon those who despised you will change their language, and say, "We were the fools, for we thought their lives without honor and now they are counted among the children of God and their lot is among the saints in heaven." A great remedy for the dangers of the world is the faithful use of the sacraments. These are the channels by which grace will flow into your souls, and by which you will be preserved from the contamination of the world. When St. Philip Neri saw a young man who regulated his life according to the law of God by frequenting the sacraments, and listened to the word of God, he said, "If he is not saved, who will be saved?" Some young people are determined to live a life free from restraint; they do not go to confession, and having no good confessor to direct them they never hear a word of reprimand.

Keep holy the Sabbath-day. St. Basil describes how the people in his time sanctified the Sunday; they went at dawn to the house of God, went to confession with great compunction of heart and then sang psalms. They went to communion on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and on

the feasts of the martyrs. Thus did these first Christians sanctify the Sunday; while in our day, there are many who scarcely go to Mass: it is seldom that they go to communion, perhaps once a year at Easter, and some of them not then. Never be so careless of your salvation as to neglect to go to communion at Easter.

Be devout and pious in church. How pitiable a sight it is, and one which rouses our indignation, to see young people act in a giddy manner and with levity in church! Such want of respect in church is an insult to God. Such people are the very ones of whom the Lord complains, "A people that continually provoke Me to anger before My face." The same way St. Paul asks, "Have you not houses to eat and to drink in, or despise ye the Church of God?" To see young people devout in church is a beautiful sight. The saintly bishop, Anscarius, saw a little boy come into the church with great outward devotion, which showed his good interior disposition. The bishop said this boy will one day become a great saint; his expectations were realized, for this child became a saint, and succeeded him in the episcopacy. Some people are ashamed to be pious among their companions who are less scrupulous. I suppose it is because they think they would be ridiculed: but you, my dear young friends, will not, I am sure, be ashamed to appear pious; be not ashamed to kneel on both knees in devout prayer; attend to the Mass with great piety, even though your neighbors talk and laugh. What do you care for the remarks of those about you, provided you please almighty God? Bestir yourselves, then, to do what is right in church; despise the mean influence of human respect which keeps so many from showing their devotion, and induces them even to neglect the use of the sacraments.

Be obedient and subject to your masters and to your parents. You are bound to this obedience not only because you are still young, but this subjection to your superiors will last all your life, for the proper preservation of order. You know that the commandment of honoring your parents will not be

done away with as long as they live. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi said, "O, dear virtue of obedience, you bind me, you subject me, but at the same time you defend me, and moreover," she said, "if any one wishes to die a happy death, let that person allow himself to be guided by his superiors." St. Teresa says she would have gone to hell had she not obeyed her superiors. But why should I quote the maxims of the saints, when we have the example and teaching of Our Lord? He was God, Creator of heaven and earth, and still He was subject to Mary and Joseph, and to God. He was obedient even unto death, the death of the cross.

Let me also most warmly recommend to you, my dear young people, devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Be her affectionate and devout children as were St. Aloysius Gonzaga, Philip Neri, Stanislaus Kostka and many others. In fact there never was a saint who did not love the Mother of God. Have Mary always in your mind, always in your heart, and always on your tongue. St. Bonaventure, the honeyed Doctor of the Church, says, "As long as I live, I will love and glorify Mary." Honor that dear Mother, pray to her often, that she take care of you and defend you against sin; ask her that she may even obtain for you an early death, rather than allow you to fall into mortal sin.

A young Chinese girl belonging to the imperial family was very good, and once when she went to confession, the missionary said, "My child, by the grace of God, you are now His good daughter; but the country is so full of bad people, that perhaps you may again fall away from grace. I confess I am very much concerned at this possibility." "You need not fear," she answered, "for I would rather die than offend my good God." "If that be the case, you will remain steadfast: but pray to the Blessed Virgin, tell her that you would die rather than offend God, and ask her to keep you in that disposition." A few days after the girl was taken sick, and she rejoiced at the prospect of death, because she was now certain that she would not offend God.

You, too, my good young people, ought to make a similar prayer and pledge yourself to give up your life rather than to fall into sin.

My last word and exhortation will be to remember how good Our Lord is. He is such a good Father that He accepts every sacrifice and notes it, that He may reward us for it in the future. Every word of edification for your companions, every little act of charity to your neighbor, each little kindness toward others, every prayer, be it ever so short, every inclination of the head when you repeat the name of Jesus, every little mortification on your part, will be treasured up in the book of life. Our Lord will invite you to sit on the throne of glory as a reward. How consoling it will be when after a brief term of years Jesus receives you at the gates of heaven and crowns you with imperishable glory.

My dear Jesus, I look to Thee, and pray that Thou keepest these, Thy young children, in Thy service and Thy holy love; make them firm in the path of virtue, and give them grace never to wander away from Thy law.

Mother most pure, this day especially I have recourse to thee, and beg that these young people who are now so good, devout, obedient and docile, may always remain so to the end of their lives.

May the blessing of Our Lord Jesus descend upon you, and remain with you forever. May He bless your parents and your families, that the peace of God may always be found with you.

Bless, O Lord, all of us, in body and in mind, that we may always work for the greater honor of God, and use the faculties of our souls in thinking how we may advance His glory.

Help us, O Lord Jesus, that we may never again fall into sin and offend Thee.

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